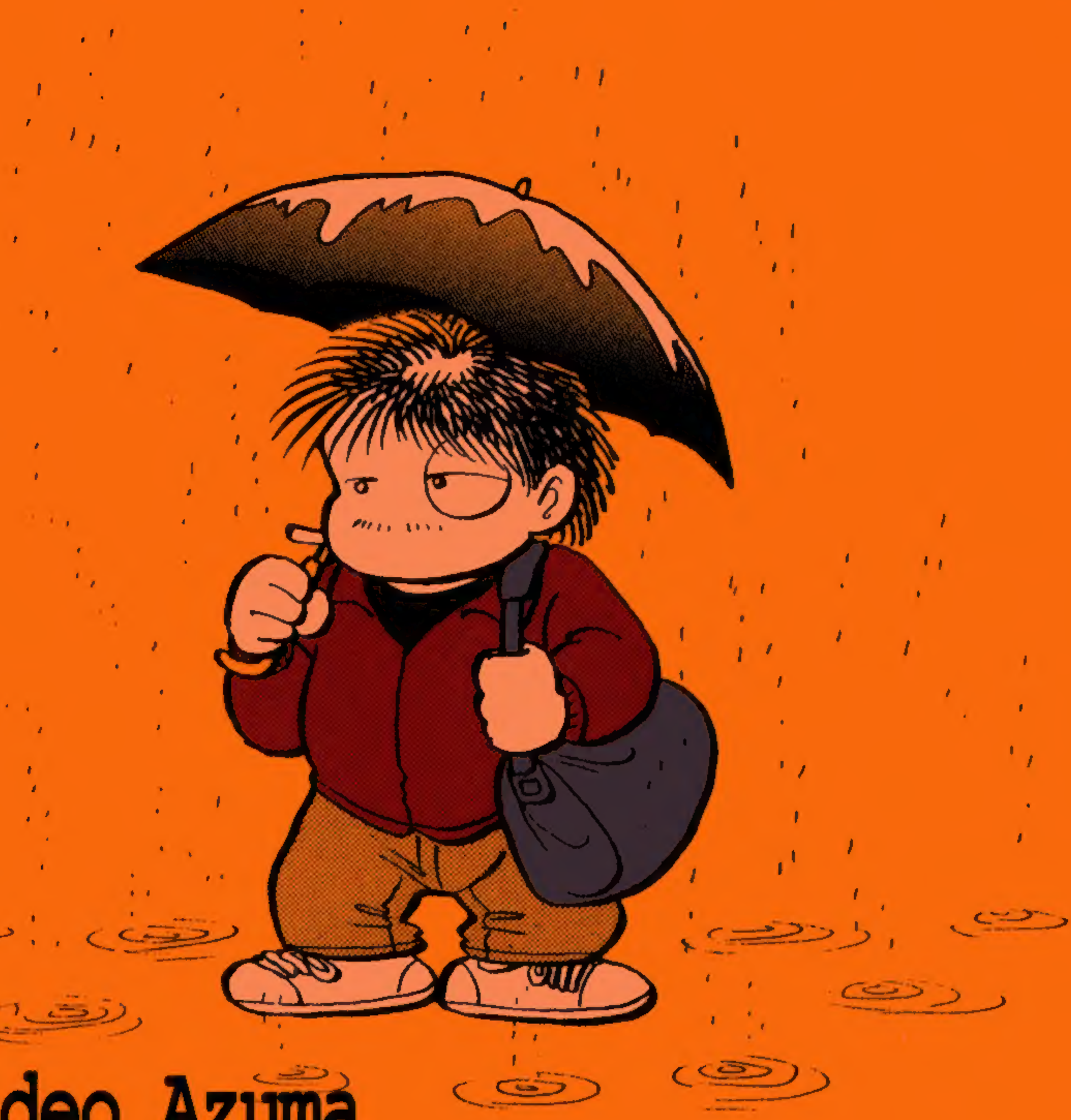

Hideo Azuma

Disappearance Diary

FANFARE

PONENT MON

Hideo Azuma

Born 6th February 1950 in Hokkaido. He moved to Tokyo where he was assistant to Rentaro Itai and debuted in manga in 1969. Throughout the 70's and 80's he produced a large body of work in many genres including the comedies FUTARI TO GONIN (Two People and Five) and YAKEKUSO TENSHI (Desperate Angel), the Science Fiction Seiun (Japanese Hugo) Award winning FUJOURI NIKKI (Absurd Diary) and is also known as the father of Lolicon manga.

But the pressures told and, in 1989, he ran away from his responsibilities and went homeless. After this experience and his eventual return to normal life, he then repeated the cycle in 1992, this time becoming a gas pipe layer in another town. Later, in 1998, his alcoholism was so bad that he was forced into rehab.

This book is his expression of those three periods of his life told, not in a deep or depressed way but, as befits his nature, in a buoyant and cheerful cartoon art and is a welcome addition to the "personal manga" genre.

In 2005, SHISSOU NIKKI (Disappearance Diary) was awarded the Grand Prize from the 9th Japan Media Arts Festival Manga Division and the Excellence Price at the 34th Japan Cartoonists Association Awards.

The background to the Diary of a Disappearance

A special confidential interview only for those readers who uncover it. A point of contact with Azuma's past, present and future which in a certain way is more detailed than the book.

Did you ask your wife for her permission when you decided to leave?

No, I left without saying a word (laughter). She became very angry, they found the body of someone who looked a lot like me and she got very upset. The first time I disappeared I told her, "I'm going to buy cigarettes"; and the second time I just walked out. The first time it was pretty rough as I had no experience, but the second time around I was already used to living as a bum. Since it was summertime, I could sleep anywhere. But, nevertheless, since there was a missing persons search warrant out, they got me (laughter).

Did your wife go pick you up again the second time?

Maybe it was because she was so flabbergasted but she wasn't as upset as the first time. I didn't show it in the manga but, when I went back the first time, she had re-done the house (laughter). What the devil is this? She had removed my studio and turned it into a foyer. I guess she must have been really pissed-off. The old foyer was simply a landing... So she needed a bigger foyer, right? (laughter).

So what happened when you went back after your second disappearance?

My kids didn't recognize me (laughter). They were in preschool and grade school.

So did you suddenly just get restless and decide to take off?

It happened gradually. I think every artist, when they realize they're imitating themselves, sink into a bottomless depression. Especially in humorous manga, if you repeat yourself, you can't make it. So, those who, on the other hand, don't worry about routine and constantly repeat the same pattern are strong. There are also readers who are into that. But, if you try to come up with new jokes all the time, you gradually start to fall apart. If you're drawing something, you recall you've already done it before and, all of a sudden, you just can't go on drawing. So the deadlines are approaching and you just don't feel like doing anything. I think I'm like that, if you're too conscientious, you end up going nuts. So being a working-man is much better for your nerves, although then it's human relations that are tough. There's a lot of jerks (laughter). In this sense, a mangaka's job seems easy because you can do it on your own, but it's not like that really. Since you lock yourself up at home, you begin to feel cornered.

In 1998 you entered a hospital...

For a time when I was working, I felt good. But I lost my marbles again. I started getting obsessed with stuff and I ended up drowning my sorrows in alcohol. As soon as I got up, I'd start to drink. I'd drink about two go[1] in the morning, three at midday and a shô[2] in the evening, I couldn't eat and, the morning after, I'd throw up. Even so, I kept on drinking. And I kept getting sick. After the third time, I could drink again. "Throw up three times" is the golden rule. Anyone who's ever been treated for alcoholism knows it. It's a secret technique. (laughter).

Wasn't everybody worried about you?

Yes, they were all worried. I was up late drinking once, and it seemed to me like the sake was watery, and it was because my wife had watered it down (laughter). You can tell right away because watery sake tastes lousy. They also kept telling me to go to the hospital for treatment, they were very worried. When there was no longer any choice and they took me to the hospital, I tried to run away, but by then my son was already quite strong and my wife is also pretty strong, so I didn't make it (laughter). It's really scary when they tie you down. They say it's like the economy-class syndrome, and people have died because of it.

How's it going now with the alcohol?

I've quit drinking. At Alcoholics Anonymous they gave me a 5 dan diploma. A year without drinking is equal to one dan. But, lately, I haven't been going. Although I still pay my dues and I'm still a member. Drinking again is called "to have a slip", and anyone who does has to start all over again in the first dan. There are also people who have trouble quitting drinking and go into rehab over and over again... it's not rare to find people who've been into rehab 5 or 6 times. It's like a drug, they can't quit. Alcohol is a drug that creates dependence. That's why, at the hospital, we're put in with the drug addicts.

The basis for treatment is the same for both, isn't it?

Yes. So we used to go to the meetings together too. We got together every day, made a circle and, one by one, made self-criticism and swore "never to drink again" and stuff like that. The ones who weren't sincere about it and the ones who attended AA but continued to drink were forced to sit seiza-style[3] in a corner.

(Continues on the back jacket...)

(1) One go is equal to 6 fluid ounces. (2) 10 go.
(3) Traditional Japanese legs tucked under bottom position.

Hideo Azuma

Disappearance Diary

FANFARE • PONENT MON

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WALKING
AT NIGHT

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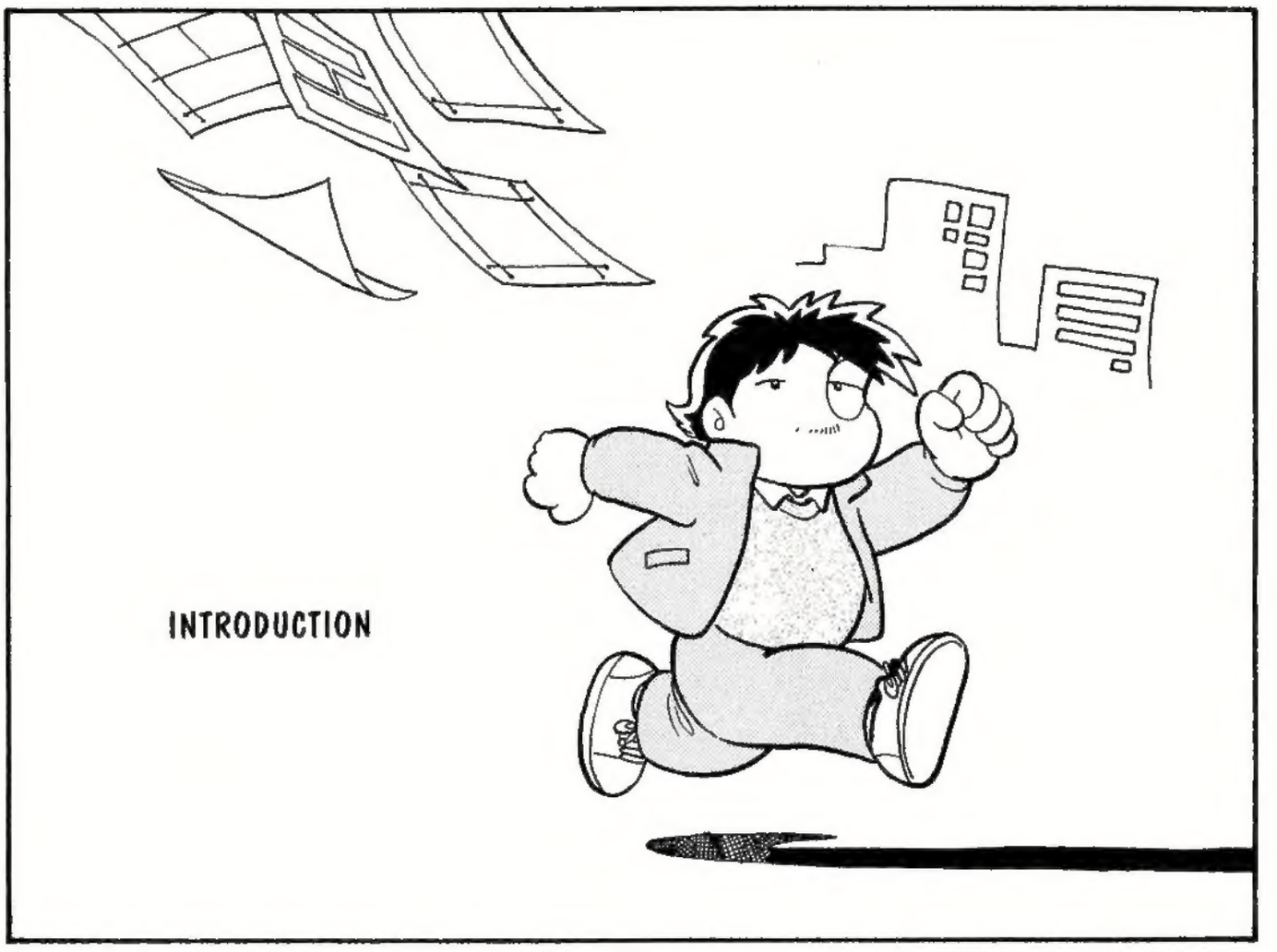
NIGHT: 8


INTRODUCTION

THIS MANGA HAS A POSITIVE OUTLOOK ON LIFE, AND SO IT HAS BEEN MADE WITH AS MUCH REALISM REMOVED AS POSSIBLE.
IT'S HARDER TO DRAW STUFF REALISTICALLY, AND IT MAKES THINGS GLOOMY!

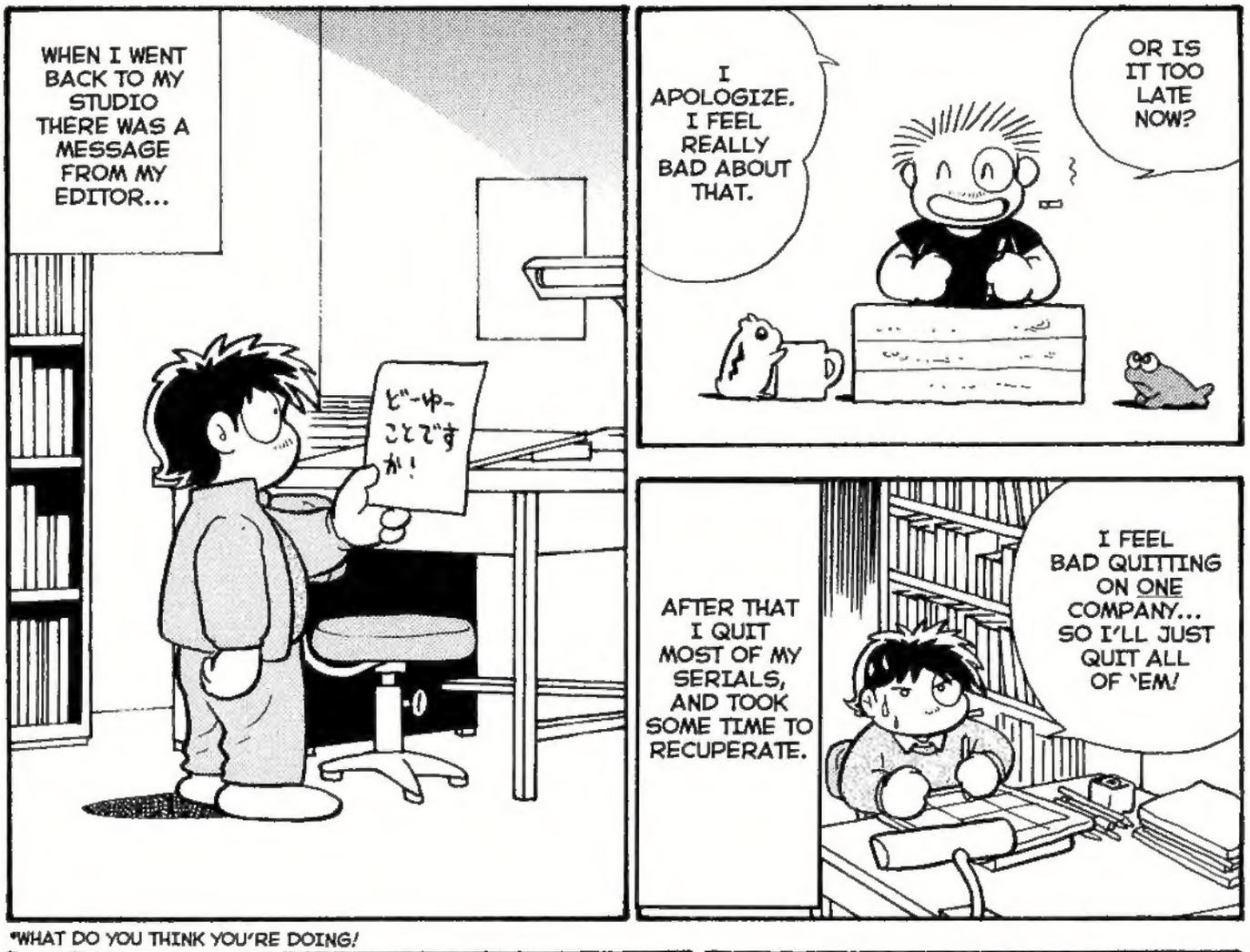
IN NOVEMBER OF '89 I ABANDONED MY PROJECTS AT A CERTAIN PUBLISHER AND RAN AWAY.
I'M STEPPING OUT TO BUY SOME SMOKES!

MY FED-UP-WITH-WORK-ITIS AND HANGOVER WERE TO BLAME, I SUPPOSE.

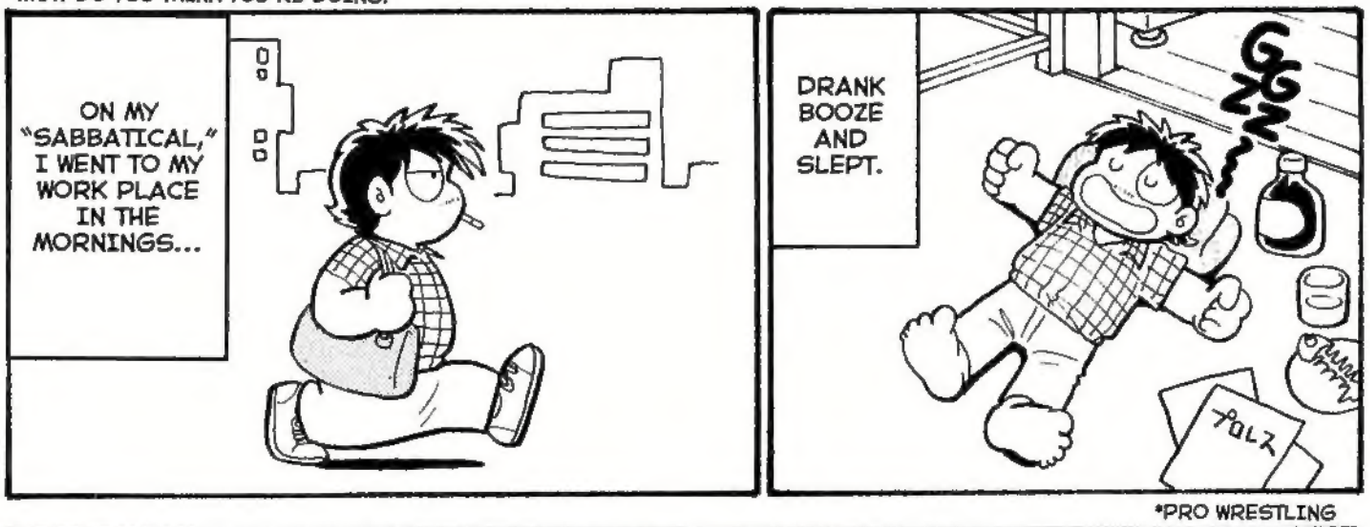
I'LL JUST HAVE A DRINK! ULP!

I FIGURE MY SERIAL IN THAT MAG WAS GONNA END NEXT ISSUE ANYWAY SO WHAT DO I CARE?

I SPENT ABOUT A WEEK CRASHING WITH FRIENDS.


WHEN I WENT BACK TO MY STUDIO THERE WAS A MESSAGE FROM MY EDITOR...
ビーやーことですか！
I APOLOGIZE. I FEEL REALLY BAD ABOUT THAT.
OR IS IT TOO LATE NOW?
AFTER THAT I QUIT MOST OF MY SERIALS, AND TOOK SOME TIME TO RECUPERATE.
I FEEL BAD QUITTING ON ONE COMPANY... SO I'LL JUST QUIT ALL OF 'EM!

*WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING!



*PRO WRESTLING

LIVING LIKE THIS, MORE AND MORE I FOUND MYSELF BEING ATTACKED BY DEPRESSION, ANXIETIES, AND DELUSIONS...
I WANTED TO DIE.
I'LL FIND SOME MOUNTAIN WHERE NO ONE'S AROUND TO DO IT.
I'D RUN OUT OF MONEY AND DRANK THE LAST OF MY LIQUOR.
GREAT! NOW'S THE TIME, WHILE I'M DRUNK...
BUT I JUST ENDED UP FALLING ASLEEP.
YAAWWW...
I HUNG MYSELF USING THE SLOPE OF THE MOUNTAIN.

S--SO COLD! H--H--H-- HURTS!
WHOOO
CRAK
CRAK
SNAP
SNAP
MY JOINTS AND MUSCLES CONTRACTED CAUSING ME INCREDIBLE PAIN AND A SURE INDICATION THAT I WAS ON THE VERGE OF FREEZING TO DEATH.

NIGHT: 1

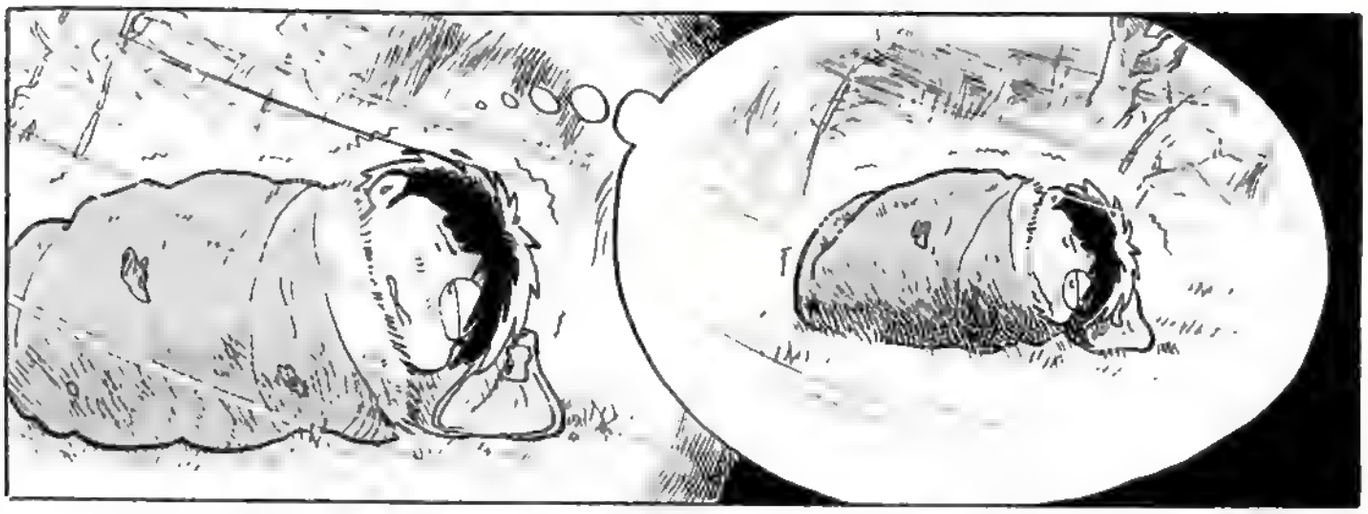
NOVEMBER.

I WAS SUPPOSED TO BE OUT ON A RESEARCH TRIP FOR A PROJECT (PLEASE DON'T ASK.)...
WHOO

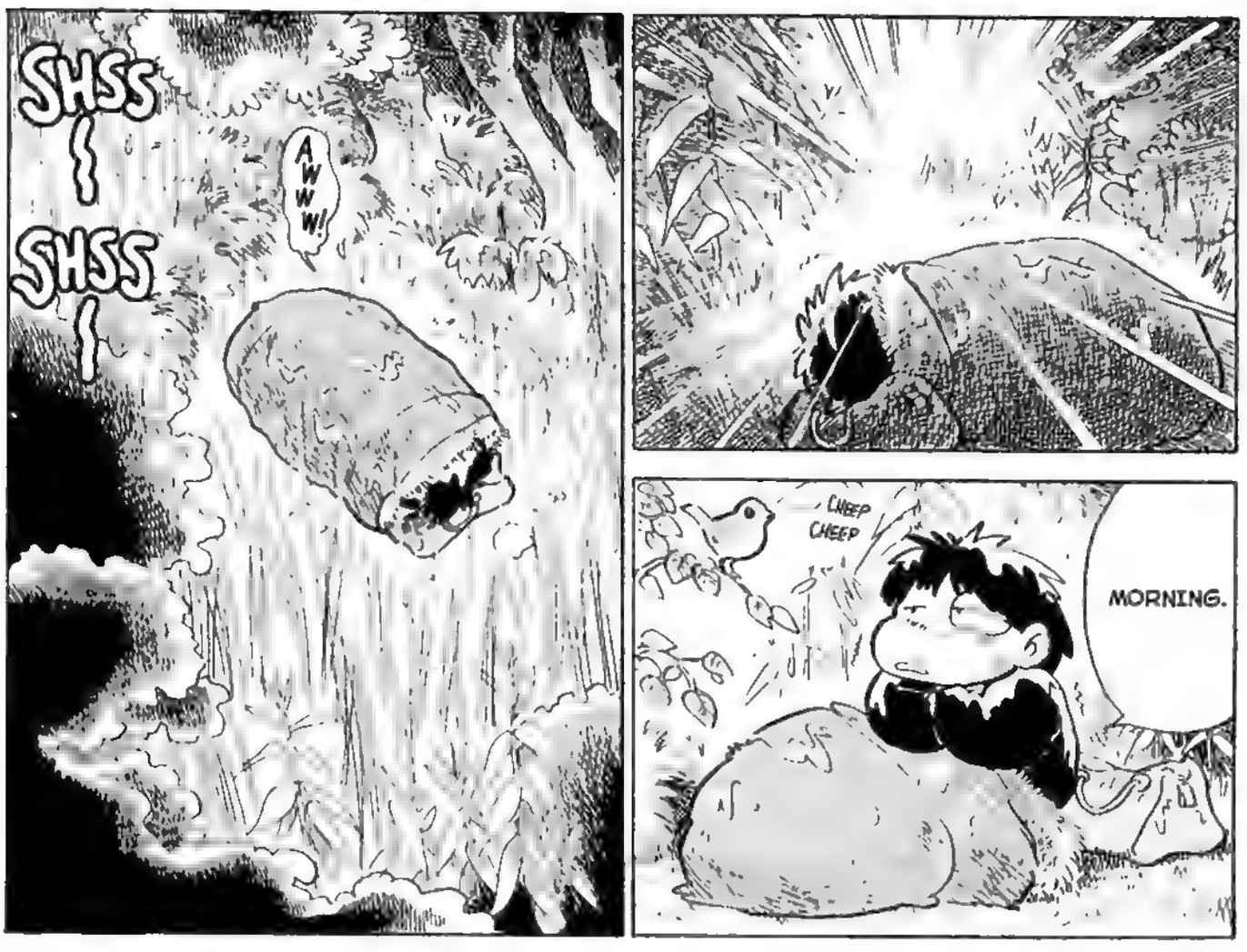
I'VE USED ALMOST ALL OF MY RESEARCH MONEY.
WHERE THE HECK AM I GONNA STAY TONIGHT?
WHY COULDN'T THERE BE SOME CHEAP, RUSTIC MERCHANTS' LODGE AROUND...
SHFF SHFF
HERE...
THERE'S NOTHING BETTER IN THE WORLD THAN SLEEP. ALL THE FOOLS GET UP TO WORK...
WHOOOO
I CAN'T SLEEP LIKE THIS!
PHOOO
HACK! AK!

SNAP
SLRPP
HOARK!
UHH, I FEEL SICK...
SHFF SHFF
SO COLD...
?
IS THIS THING FOR CATCHING WILD BIRDS?
A M-- MANDARIN!
JUICY...
HMM?

MIST NETS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE BANNED! THE NERVE!!
HMPH! HMPH!
OOH!
I GOT WILD RADISHES!
CHOMP CHOMP
SHRRF
GOOD THING I FOUND THIS STRAW MAT AND TATTERED SHEET!
WHOOOOO
BRR BRR



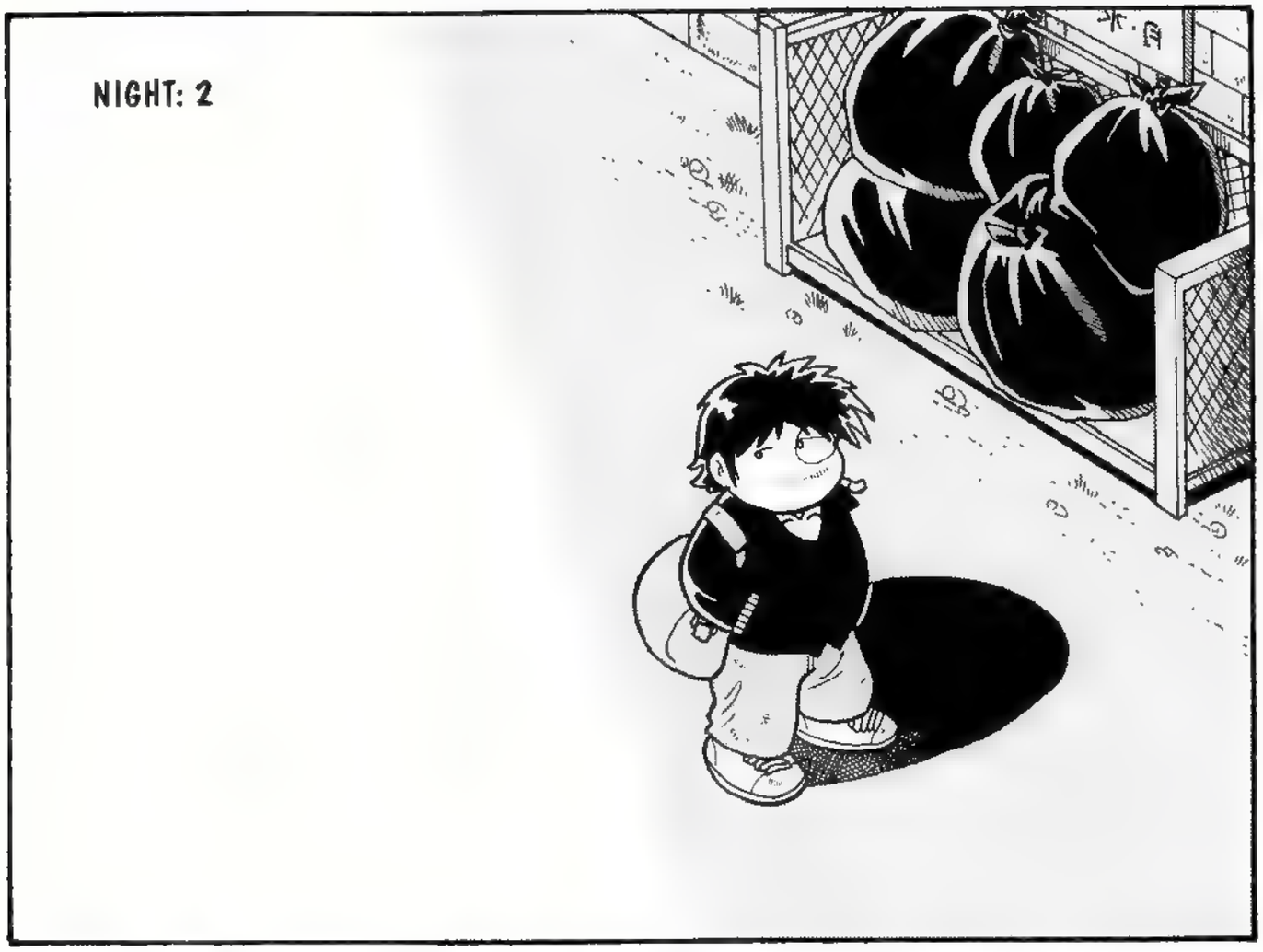
WHEN I WOKE UP FROM MY DREAM OF BEING BATTERED BY A COLD WIND, I WAS BEING BATTERED BY A COLD WIND! IT TOTALLY FAILED TO FULFILL ITS DUTY AS A DREAM!
WHOOROOROO WOOWOOO
SHSS

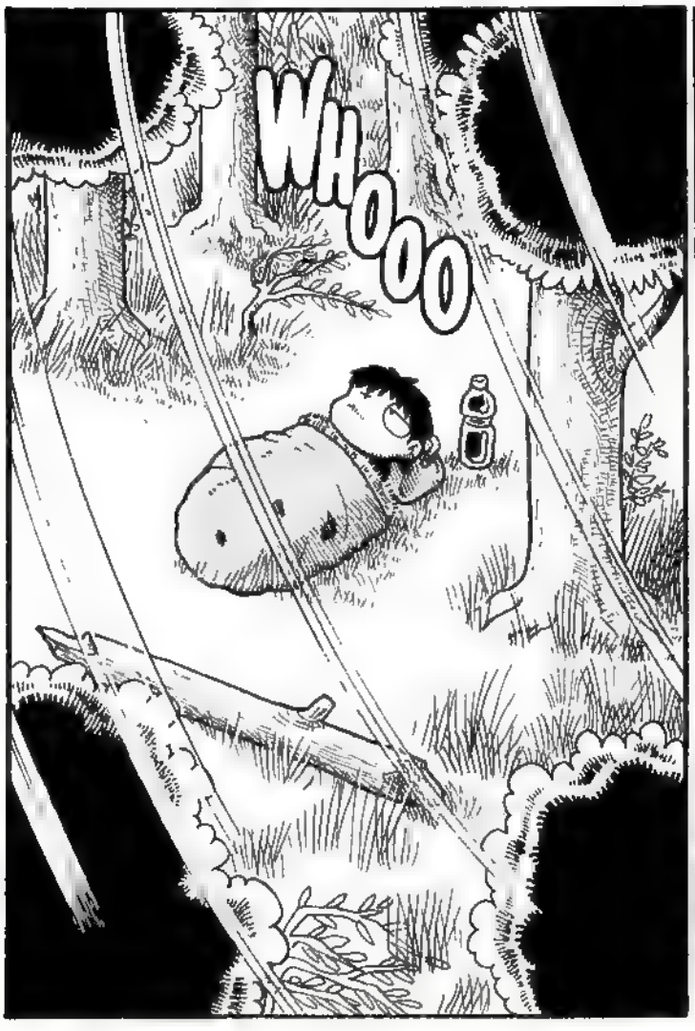

SHSS
SHSS
AWWW!
CHEEP CHEEP
MORNING.

I ENJOYED THE WILD BIRDS WHILE I MADE MY BREAK-FAST.
CHIRP CHIRP
IF YOU PEEL THE SKIN OFF A RADISH THICK, YOU GET A MILD FLAVOR...
AND IF YOU PEEL THINLY, YOU GET A TANGY FLAVOR.
POP POP
MUNCH MUNCH
WHY CAN'T I FIND AN ELECTRIC BLANKET SOMEWHERE!
WHOOO
I FOUND A ROTTEN BLANKET!!
CHRK CHRK

CLEARLY I'D FOUND THE DWELLING OF SOMEONE WHO WAS APPARENTLY OUT LOOKING FOR SUPPLIES.
IT'S FULL OF OLD CLOTHES AND A WATERPROOF SHEET.
THIS GUY'S GOT GOOD STUFF...
AAH! CHEESE!
SWIPING FOOD FROM A HOMELESS PERSON IS JUST ABOUT THE LOWEST, MOST FORBIDDEN THING A HUMAN CAN DO.
BON APPETIT!
AH! I FEEL JUST A BIT WARMER!
THANKS TO THAT ROTTEN BLANKET, FOR ABOUT TWO OR THREE HOURS THAT DAY I WAS FINALLY ABLE TO SLEEP.
WHOOOOO
WHOOROOROO

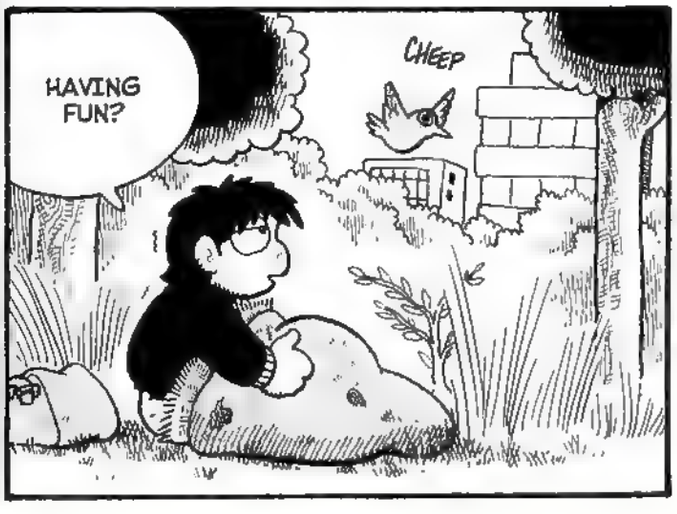
OUT AGAIN TODAY, HUH...
.....
I WANT A CIGARETTE...
BUTTS... BUTTS...
*BURNABLE GARBABE/MONDAY WEDNESDAY FRIDAY
NOW, WHAT IS THIS?
MM... NOT HALF BAD...
.....
TEMPURA OIL...


NIGHT: 2

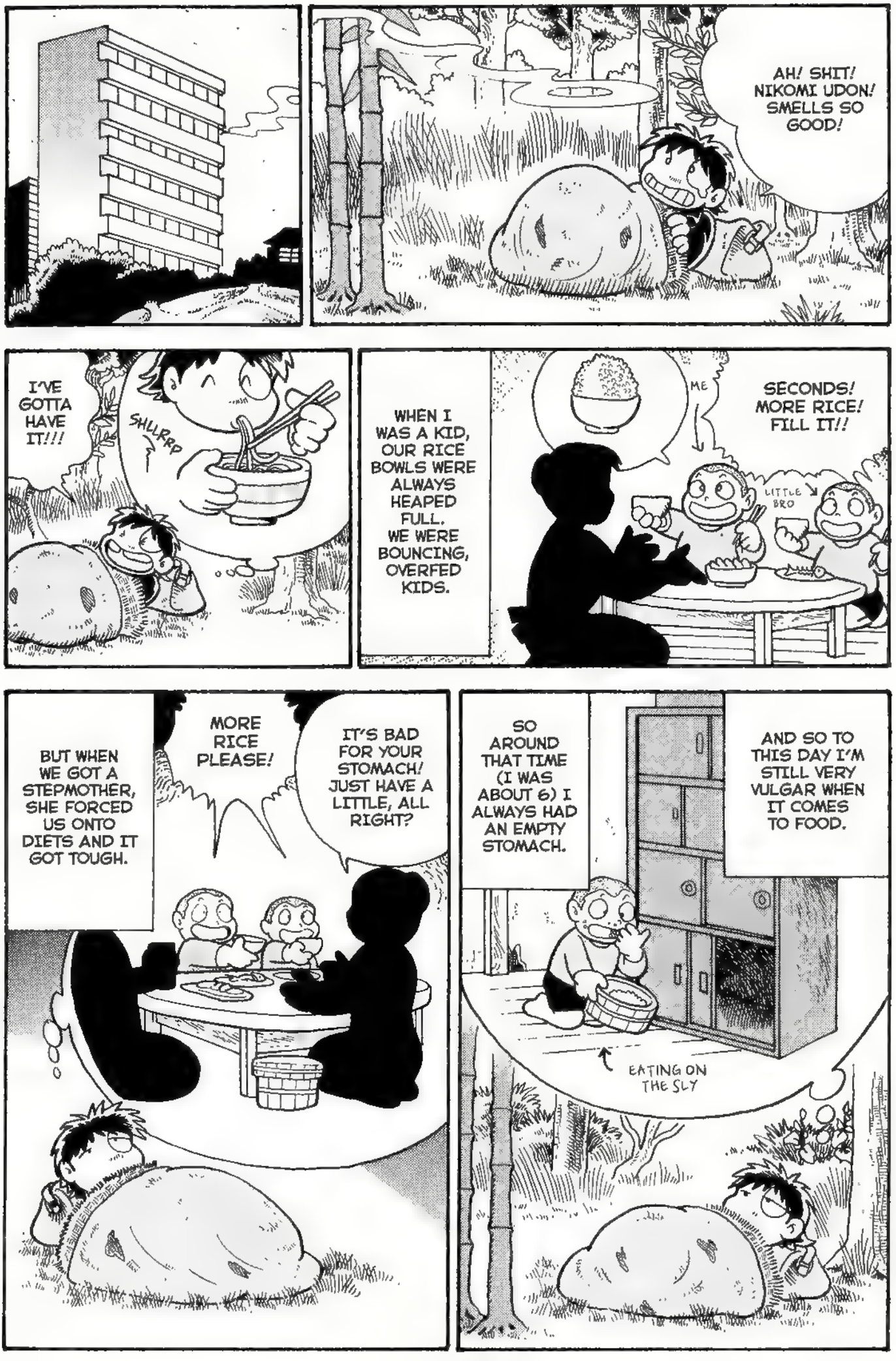

WHOOO

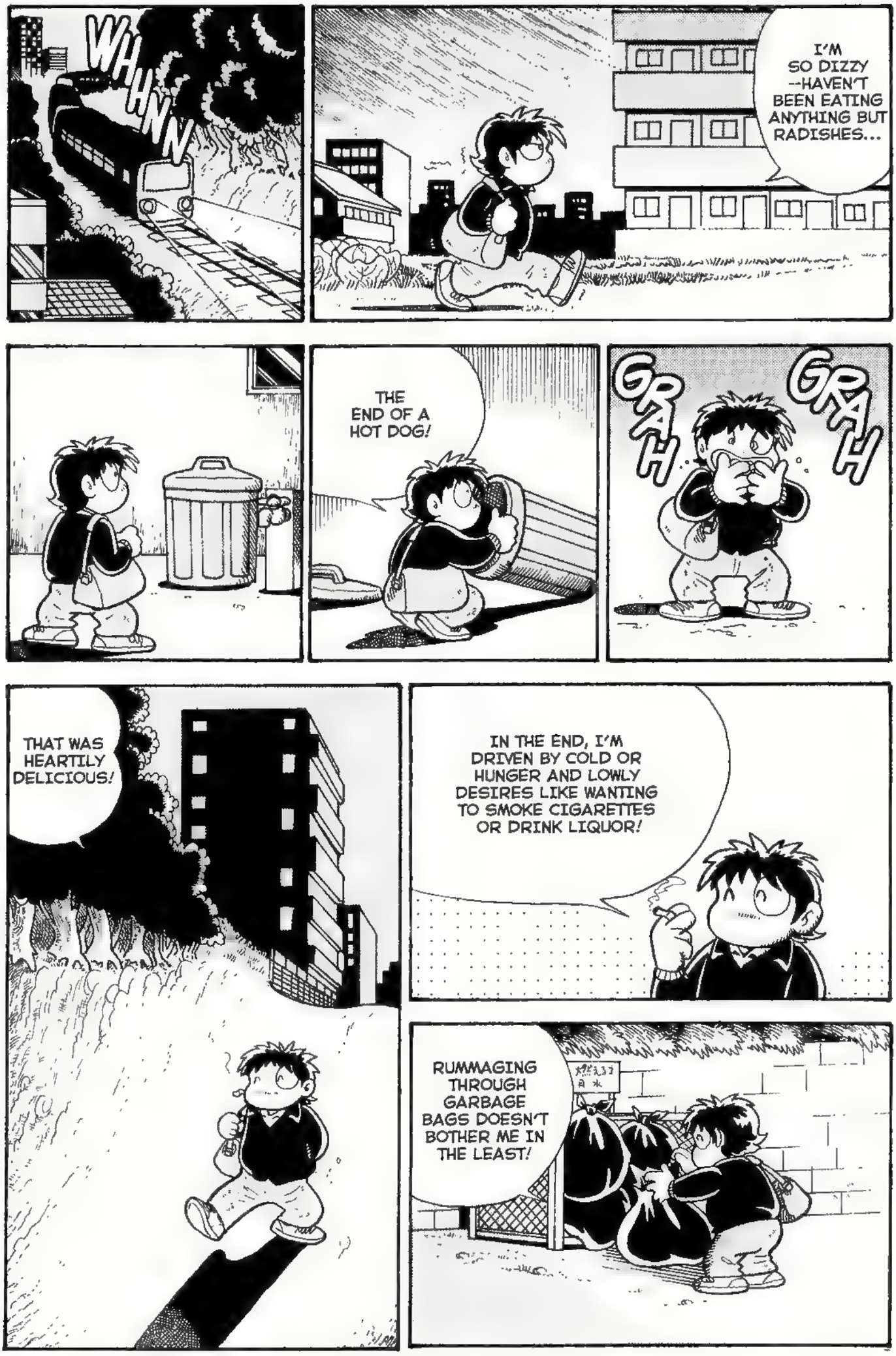
CHEEP
CHEEP

HELLO, MEJIRO.


HAVING FUN?
CHEEP

RADISH FOR BREAKFAST TODAY TOO.
CHOMP
CHOMP
MMM! SWEET...
AND FOR MY AFTER MEAL DESSERT...
TEMPURA OIL!
PLP
PLP
PLP
SLRRP
AHH! NOURISHMENT FOR THE WHOLE BODY!
THESE ARE ALL THE BUTTS I HAVE LEFT. I'D LOVE TO GO COLLECT SOME MORE...
BUT I HATE RUNNING INTO PEOPLE.
I'LL GO LOOKING IN THE NIGHT.
WHOOO


AH! SHIT! NIKOMI UDON! SMELLS SO GOOD!
I'VE GOTTA HAVE IT!!!
SHLURRP
WHEN I WAS A KID, OUR RICE BOWLS WERE ALWAYS HEAPED FULL. WE WERE BOUNCING, OVERFED KIDS.
ME
SECONDS! MORE RICE! FILL IT!!
LITTLE BRO
BUT WHEN WE GOT A STEPMOTHER, SHE FORCED US ONTO DIETS AND IT GOT TOUGH.
MORE RICE PLEASE!
IT'S BAD FOR YOUR STOMACH! JUST HAVE A LITTLE, ALL RIGHT?
SO AROUND THAT TIME (I WAS ABOUT 6) I ALWAYS HAD AN EMPTY STOMACH.
AND SO TO THIS DAY I'M STILL VERY VULGAR WHEN IT COMES TO FOOD.
EATING ON THE SLY

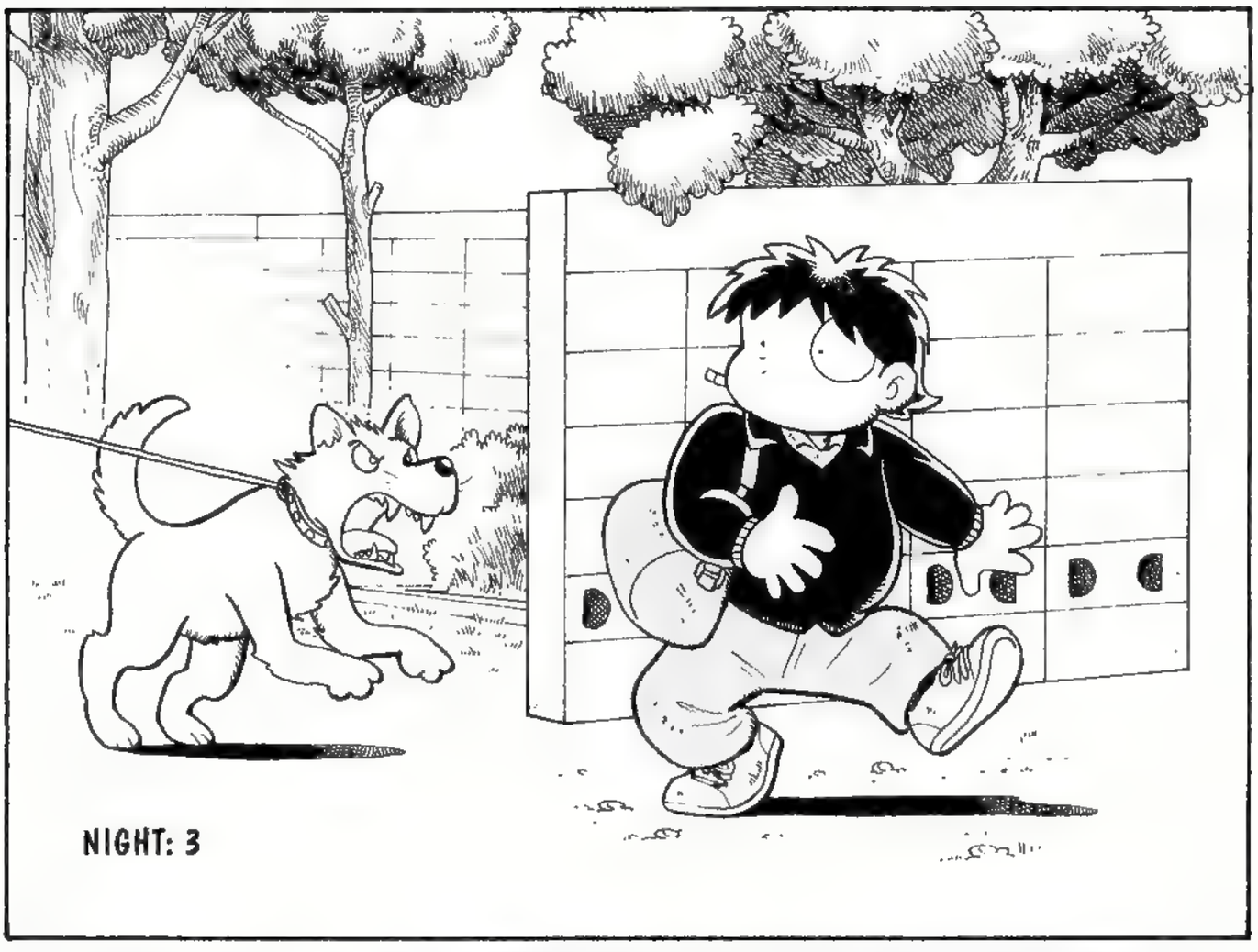

WHHNN
I'M SO DIZZY --HAVEN'T BEEN EATING ANYTHING BUT RADISHES...
THE END OF A HOT DOG!
GRAH
GRAH
THAT WAS HEARTILY DELICIOUS!
IN THE END, I'M DRIVEN BY COLD OR HUNGER AND LOWLY DESIRES LIKE WANTING TO SMOKE CIGARETTES OR DRINK LIQUOR!
RUMMAGING THROUGH GARBAGE BAGS DOESN'T BOTHER ME IN THE LEAST!

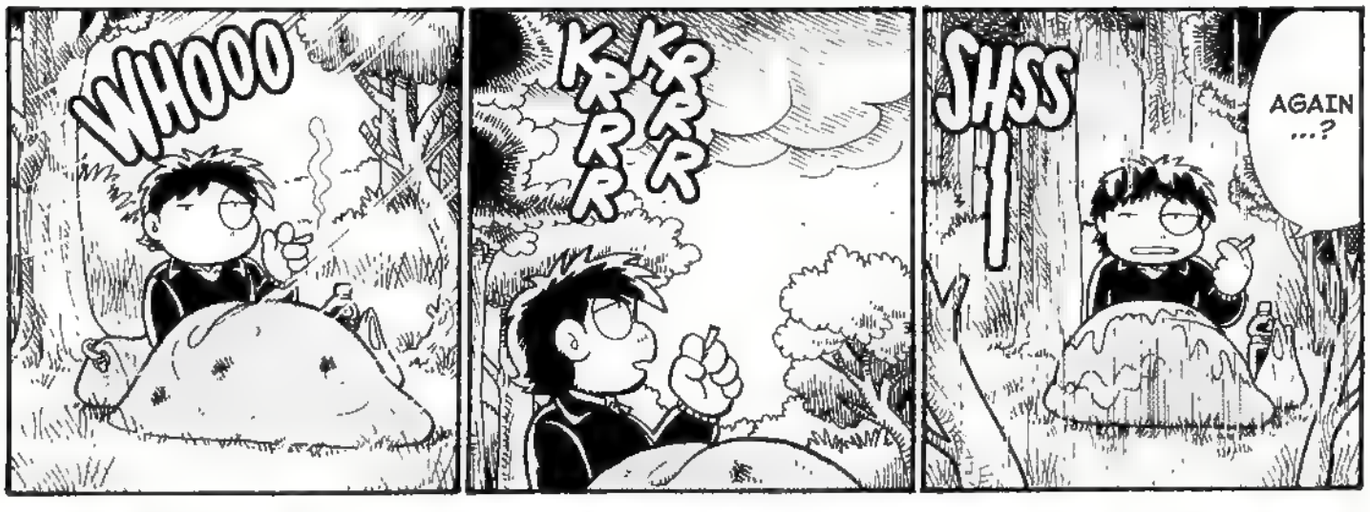
VRRMM
I DON'T EVEN CARE WHEN A CAR SHINES ITS HEADLIGHTS ON ME!
AH! NIKUMAN!
BIT MOLDY THOUGH...
WHAT'S THIS?
SALTED KUKI WAKAME!
EUCH! SO SOUR!
THAT DAY'S HAUL WAS SALTED KUKI WAKAME, A SLICE OF ANCHOVIE PIZZA, THREE RAW EGGS, AND CIGARETTE BUTTS, ETC.
I PICKED UP SOME WILD CABBAGE.
I MIXED THE CABBAGE TOGETHER WITH CHOPPED KUKI WAKAME AND PUT IT IN A PLASTIC BAG.
CHOP CHOP

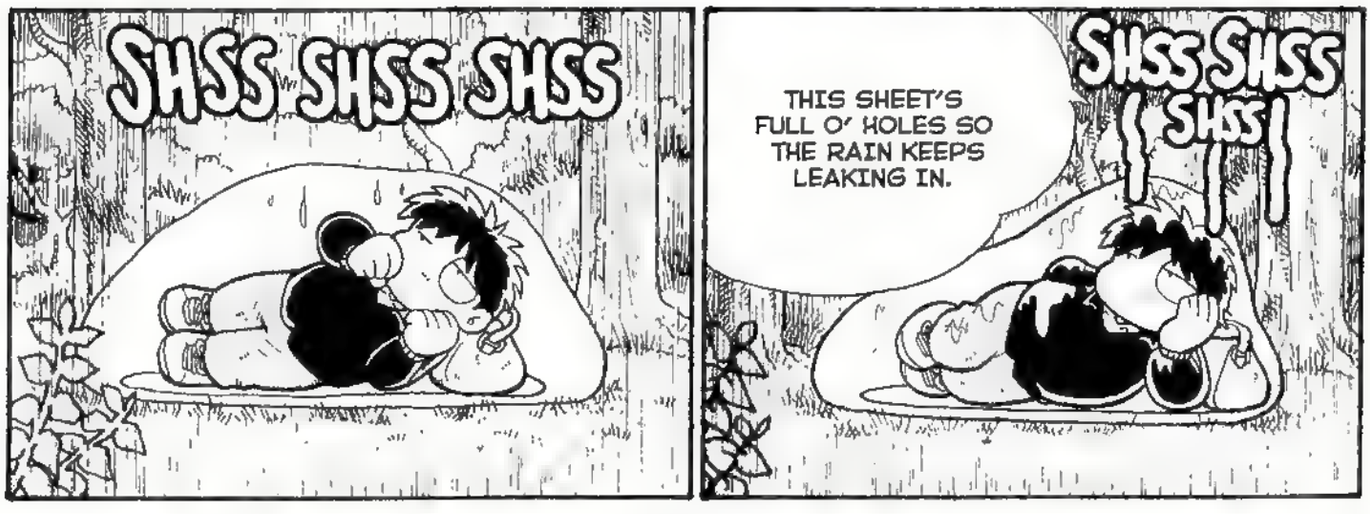
I PUT IT UNDER MY BUTT AND SLEPT ON IT.
AND WHEN I WOKE UP IT HAD BECOME A DELICIOUS PICKLED TREAT.
PRETTY GOOD!
THESE EGGS ARE RAW, BUT THEY HAVEN'T GONE BAD AT ALL!
I MIXED IT WITH TEMPURA OIL AND...
MAYO !!
MEJIRO, I'M A PRETTY REFINED GUY, AREN'T I!
BUT IT'S STILL SO COLD!
MY FEET ARE FREEZING!
WHOOOO
OF COURSE! I'LL WRAP SOME SCRAPS OFF THIS TATTERED BLANKET AROUND MY FEET...

THEN PUT MY SOCKS ON OVER THAT...
SAY! THAT'S PRETTY WARM!
I JUST CAN'T STOP THINKING ABOUT THAT MOLDY NIKUMAN!
SO FINALLY, THE NEXT NIGHT I WENT BACK TO GET IT.
BUT SINCE THEY'RE TOTALLY FROZEN, I CAN'T TELL FROM THE SMELL IF THEY'RE ROTTEN OR NOT.
I'LL MAKE A CAMP FIRE...
I FIGURE IF I JUST SCRAPE THE MOLD OFF THE SURFACE IT COULD BE PRETTY GOOD!

CRAK CRAK
PHOO~~
NOW I'LL COOK IT AND SEE...
OOH! IT SMELLS GOOD!
SPAK
MMM! AND IT'S GENUINE CHINESE NIKUMAN TO BOOT!
HAHHH...
THAT WAS THE FIRST REAL FOOD I'VE HAD IN AGES AND NOW I NEED TO TAKE A DUMP!
BUT I HADN'T EATEN ANYTHING BUT RADISHES FOR ABOUT TWO WEEKS AND HADN'T TAKEN A DUMP SO IT WAS LUDICROUSLY HARD.
AAAH!! YOWOWOW !!
I USED TEMPURA OIL TO SAVE ME HERE TOO. IT'S ALL PURPOSE, THAT TEMPURA OIL.


NIGHT: 3


WHOOO
KRRRR
KRRRR
SHSS
AGAIN ...?


SHSS SHSS SHSS
THIS SHEET'S FULL O' HOLES SO THE RAIN KEEPS LEAKING IN.
SHSS SHSS SHSS

SHSS SHSS
BRR BRR
JUST HAVING A ROOF IS SOMETHING THAT MAKES HOUSES SO GREAT!
AIRING OUT TO DRY.
AFTER A WHILE I FOUND MYSELF A SHEET THAT WASN'T LEAKY AND...
BATH MATS.
IF I PUT THESE UNDER ME I'LL BE PROTECTED FROM BELOW TOO.
BUT I DON'T WANT TO PUT UP A TENT OR ANYTHING CONSPICUOUS LIKE THAT. I DON'T HAVE THAT KIND OF BRAVADO.
HI! I'M HOMELESS!
I SCORED A NEW BLANKET, AND AT LONG LAST I WAS ABLE TO SLEEP IN WARMTH.

I WAS UP AND AT 'EM FROM ABOUT 11 AT NIGHT TILL THE SUN STARTED COMING UP ABOUT 3 OR 4.
MAYBE I'LL GO DO SOME "WORK," I GUESS.
MISTER YAMAMOTO (I NAMED HIM MYSELF), WHO LIVED IN THE SAME AREA OF THE WOODS, WAS ALWAYS OUT. I NEVER SAW HIM ONCE.
BUT HE'S GOT GRAPEFRUITS AND ALL KINDS MORE FOOD NOW.
SO HE MUST BE HERE SOME-TIMES!
SWIPING MORE CHEESE.
TH--THIS IS...
SAKE DREGS...
SNIF
SNIF
I'VE GOTTA HAVE IT!!
BUT THIS TIME, I RESISTED.
CIGARETTE BUTT -- YOU'RE MINE!
!
UNBELIEVABLE! THE PACK'S ALMOST FULL!

LA DEE DA!
RRARR
RRARR
RRARR
RARR
WOOF
RUFF
WOOF
RARR
ALL RIGHT ALREADY! I WON'T COME THROUGH THIS STREET ANYMORE!
SNIFF!
RAWOOF
BIKKURIMAN CHOCO (AT THE TIME, COLLECTING THE STICKERS FROM THESE CHOCOLATES WAS ALL THE RAGE. EVERYONE WOULD JUST THROW AWAY THE CHOCOLATES).
SUN'S COMING UP.
BETTER GO HOME...
HAHHH...
IT'S DELICIOUS!
MUNCH MUNCH
BIKKURIMAN CHOCO IS MAGNIFICENT!

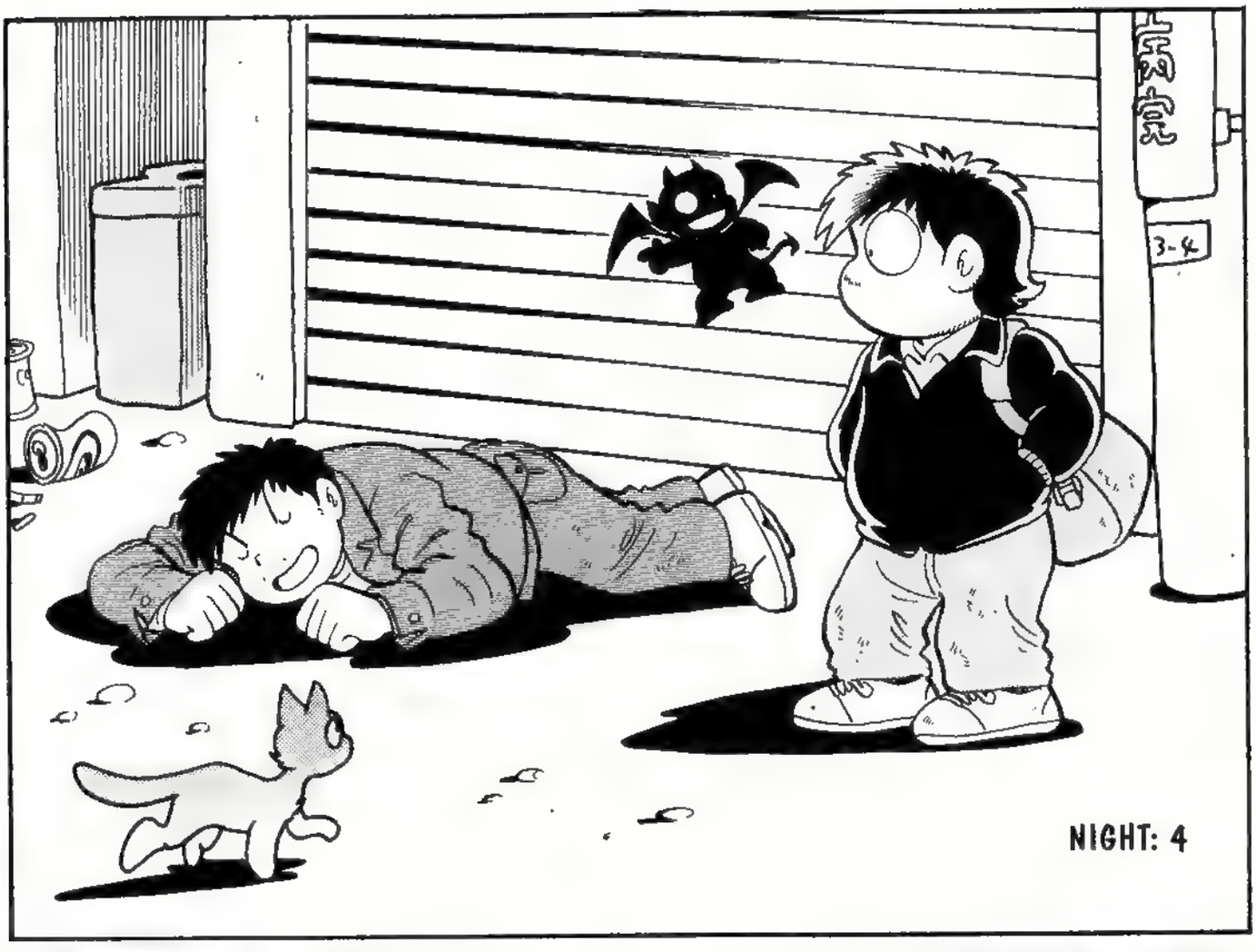
I'D EAT PICKLED CABBAGE, DRINK TEMPURA OIL AND GO TO SLEEP.
GZZZ
MM! SURE ENOUGH, FULL CIGARETTES ARE THE BEST!
HFF~~
SMELLS LIKE... SAKE...
AAH! IT'S MISTER YAMAMOTO!
YAMAMOTO'S EATING HIS SAKE DREGS!
OHH, IF ONLY...
WHOOO
PLOD PLOD
料亭 みの家
WONDER WHAT KINDA FOOD THEY DUMP...
SEE IF YOU'RE ANY GOOD!

*RESTAURANT MINOYA

COOKED FOOD, WELL SOAKED IN BROTH -- YOU PASS!
?
TA-KUAN
CRUNCH
MUNCH MUNCH
SURE IS QUIET...!
酒店
山本
A LIQUOR STORE...
TOTALLY MOLDY CANNED FOODS.

CON-
DENSED
MILK.
SOME KIND
OF FRUIT
PRESERVED
IN SYRUP.
WHAT A
HAUL!
JUST 'CAUSE
THEY'RE A
LIQUOR STORE
DOESN'T
MEAN THEY
HAVE LIQUOR
FOR ME,
HUH.
THERE'S
A TON OF
EMPTY
BOTTLES!
AHA!
AN
UNOPENED
BOTTLE OF
WINE!
A BIG
BOTTLE.
PAST THE
BEST
BEFORE
DATE.
GOTTA
HURRY BACK
AND DRINK
THIS!
OOPS!
CAN'T
FORGET TO
GET AN EMPTY
ONE-CUP!

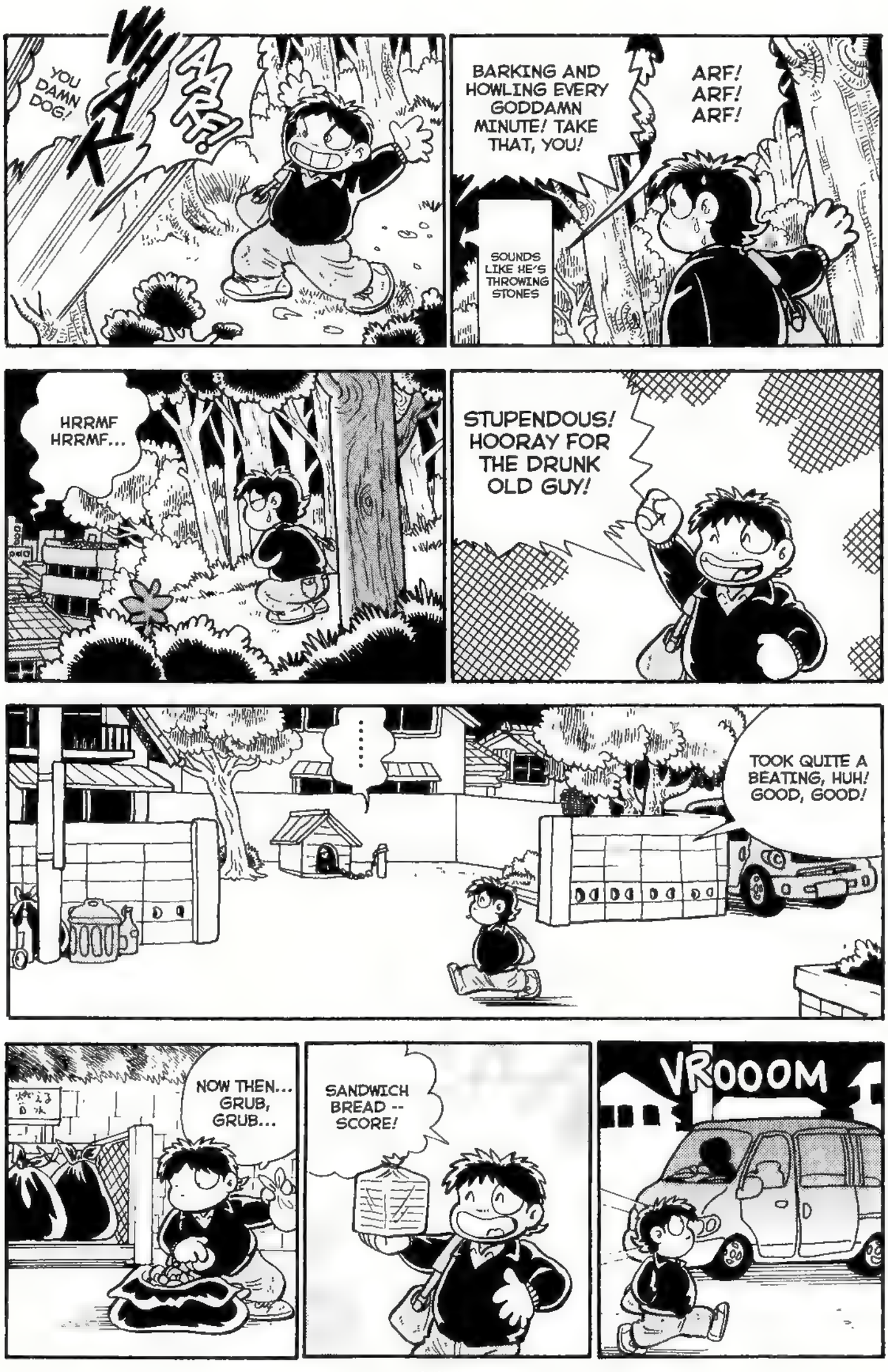
PLIP
PLIP
GLUG
OOO! THAT HIT THE SPOT!
IT REALLY GOES WITH THE TAKUAN!
MUNCH
MUNCH
BUT I'D BETTER LIMIT MYSELF TO TWO CUPS TODAY...
AAH!
AAAAH !!
ONLY ONE SIP LEFT
HRRR!
UTTER MISERY


3-4
NIGHT: 4

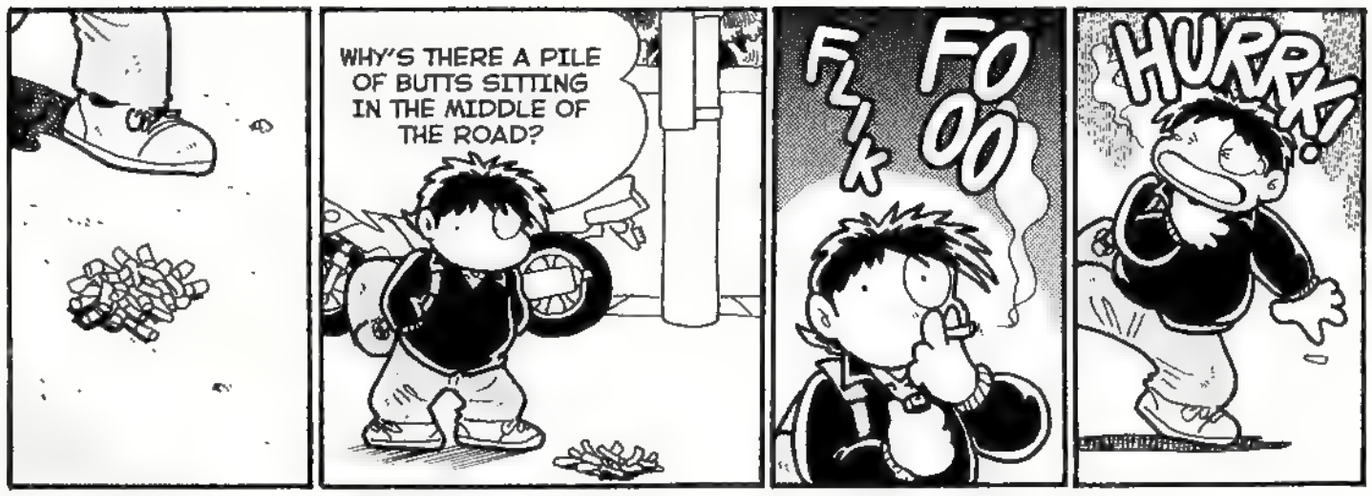
EVERYONE SHOULD BE OFF THE STREETS BY NOW... MAYBE IT'S TIME TO HEAD OUT.
WHOOO

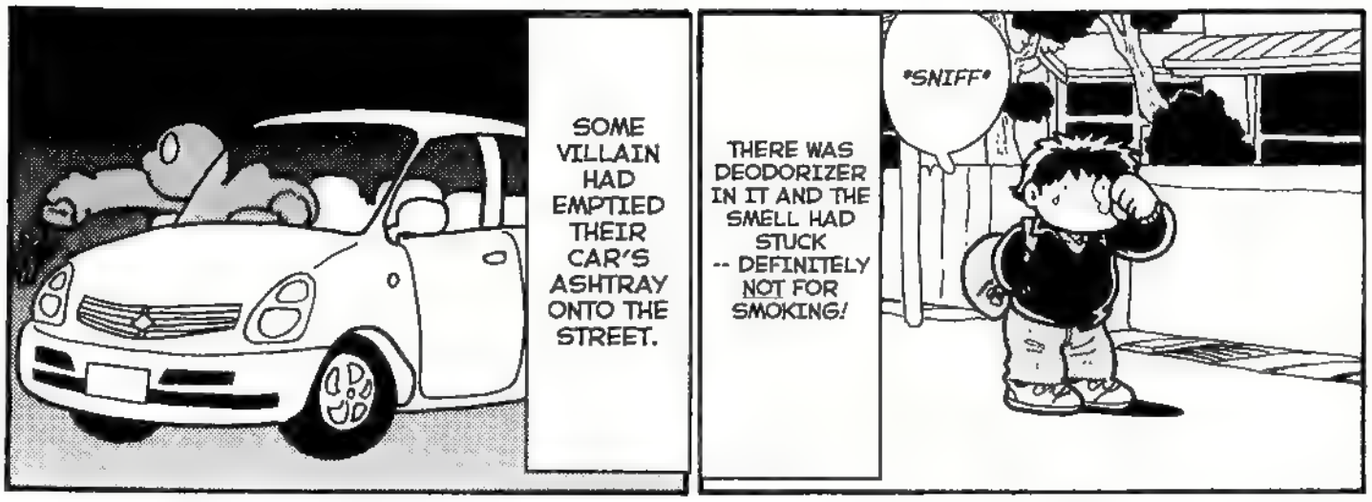
I HAVE NO IDEA HOW MUCH LONGER MY LIGHTER FUEL'LL LAST. I'D LOVE TO FIND SOME MORE!

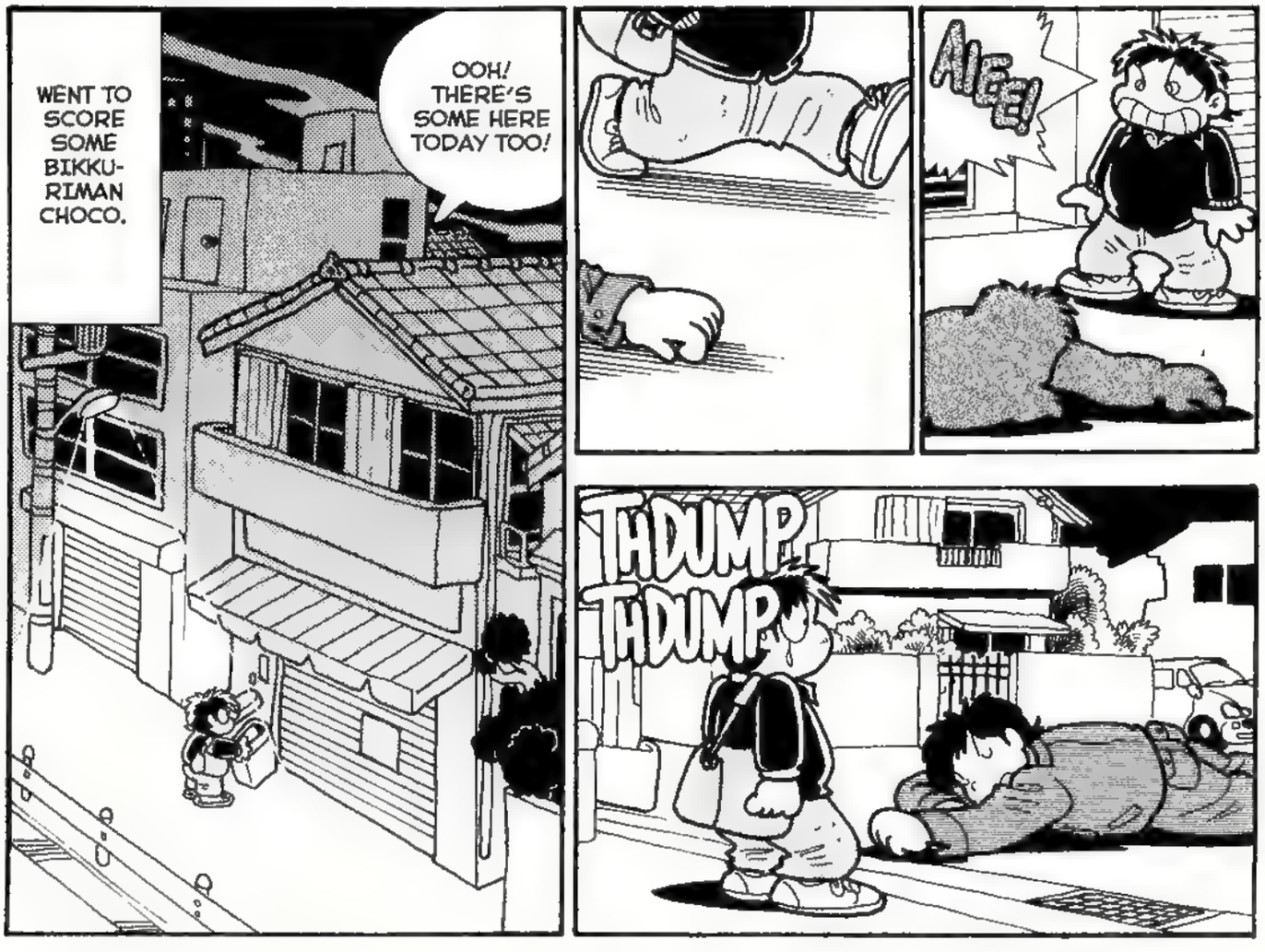
WOOF
RRRR
WOOF
IT'S THAT DOG AGAIN!


WHAT
YOU DAMN DOG!
AARF!
BARKING AND HOWLING EVERY GODDAMN MINUTE! TAKE THAT, YOU!
ARF! ARF! ARF!
SOUNDS LIKE HE'S THROWING STONES
HRRMF HRRMF...
STUPENDOUS! HOORAY FOR THE DRUNK OLD GUY!
.....
TOOK QUITE A BEATING, HUH! GOOD, GOOD!
NOW THEN... GRUB, GRUB...
SANDWICH BREAD -- SCORE!
VROOOM

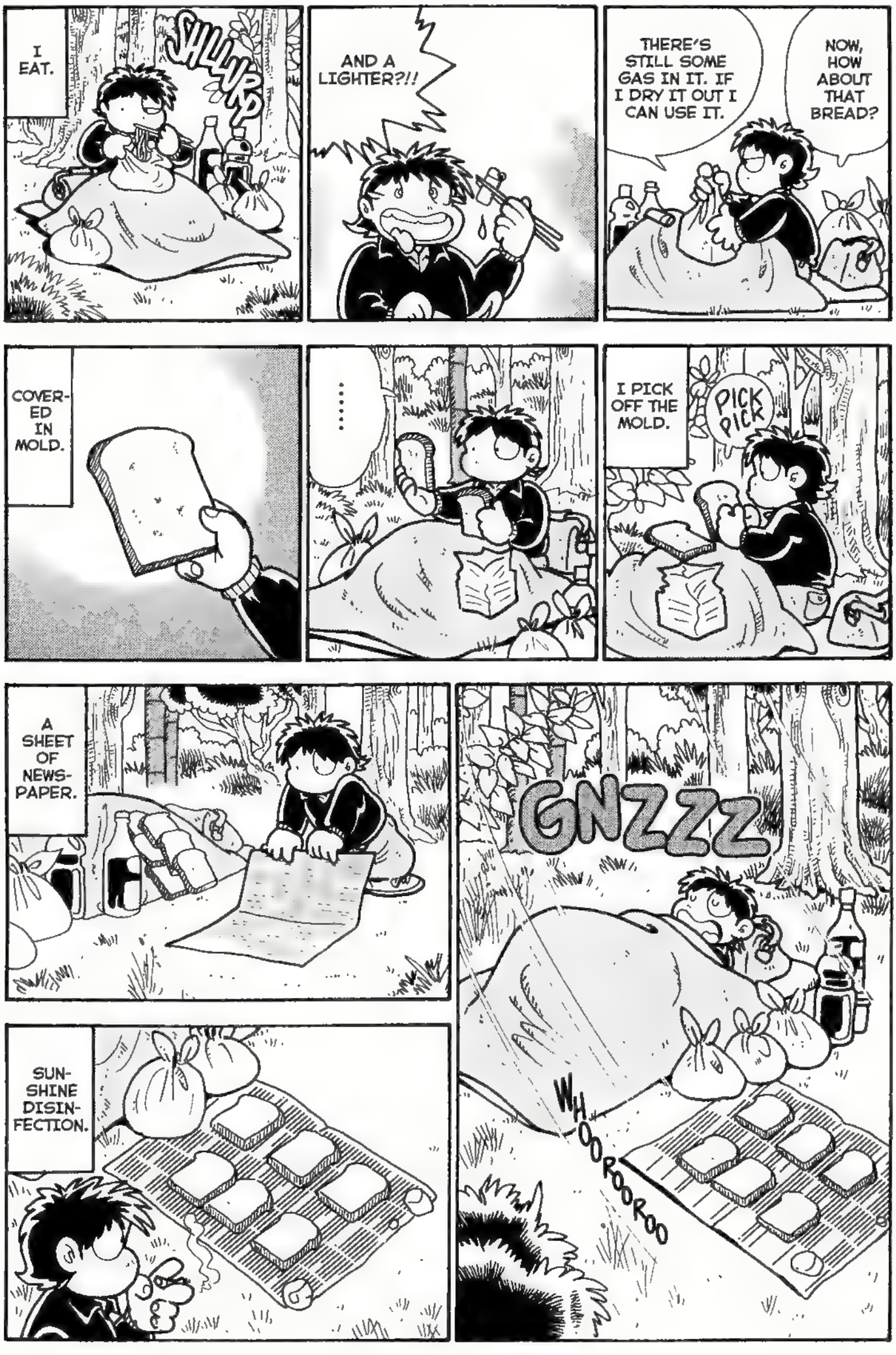
KAKAKAKAKA
VROOM
?
THEY DROPPED SOME KURE 550...
I WONDER IF I CAN USE THIS IN MY LIGHTER?
Fssss~~
FLIK
THWOOOSH
I'LL JUST HOLD ONTO THAT FOR NOW.
WHAT'S ON THE MENU AT THE EATERY TODAY?
SHRAFF
THEY'RE HAVING CRAB IN THERE? SHIT!
GRR! ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!
UDON?
FINE, WHATEVER!
SHWUP

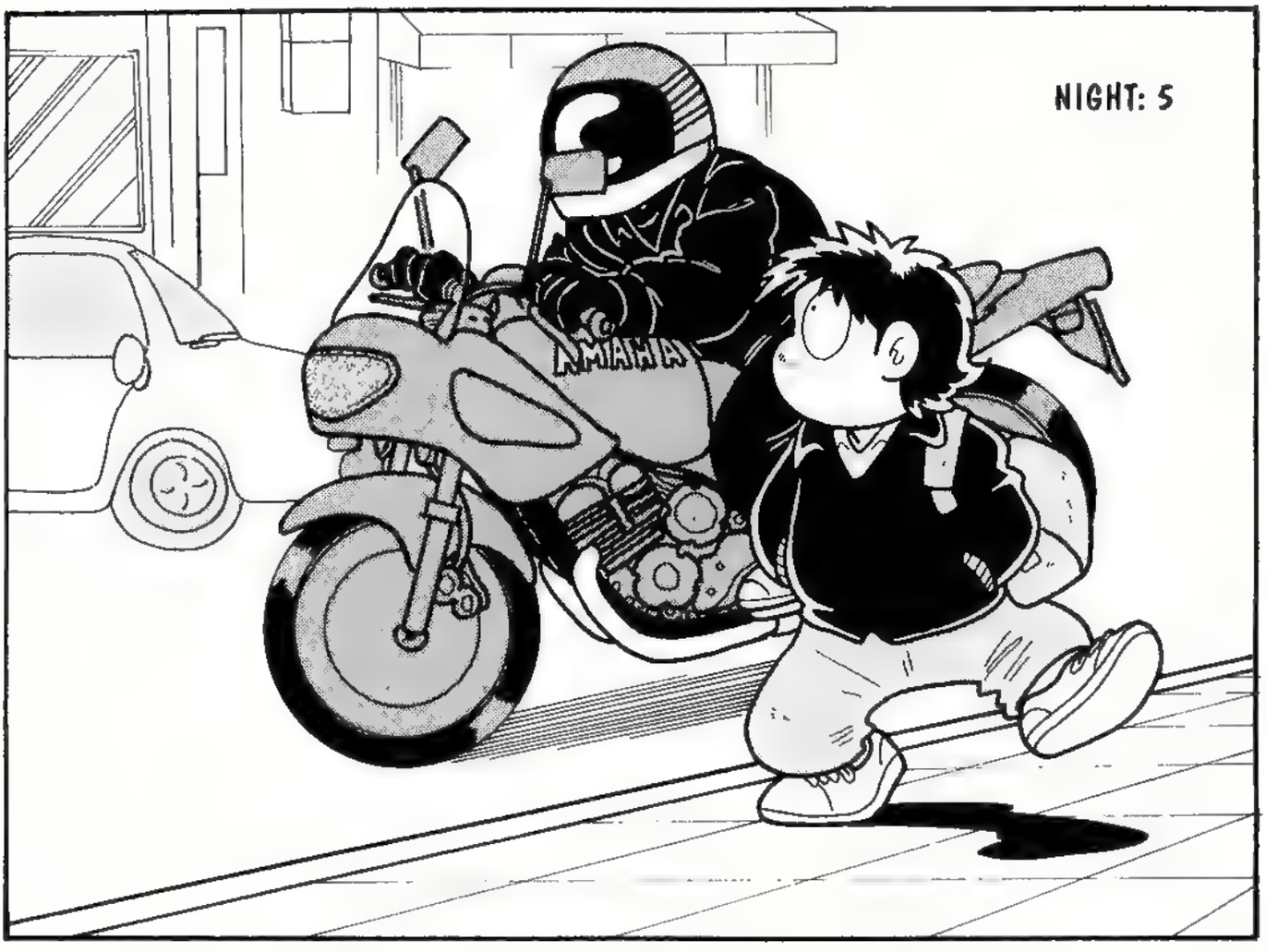

WHY'S THERE A PILE OF BUTTS SITTING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD?
FLK
FOO
OO
HURRK!

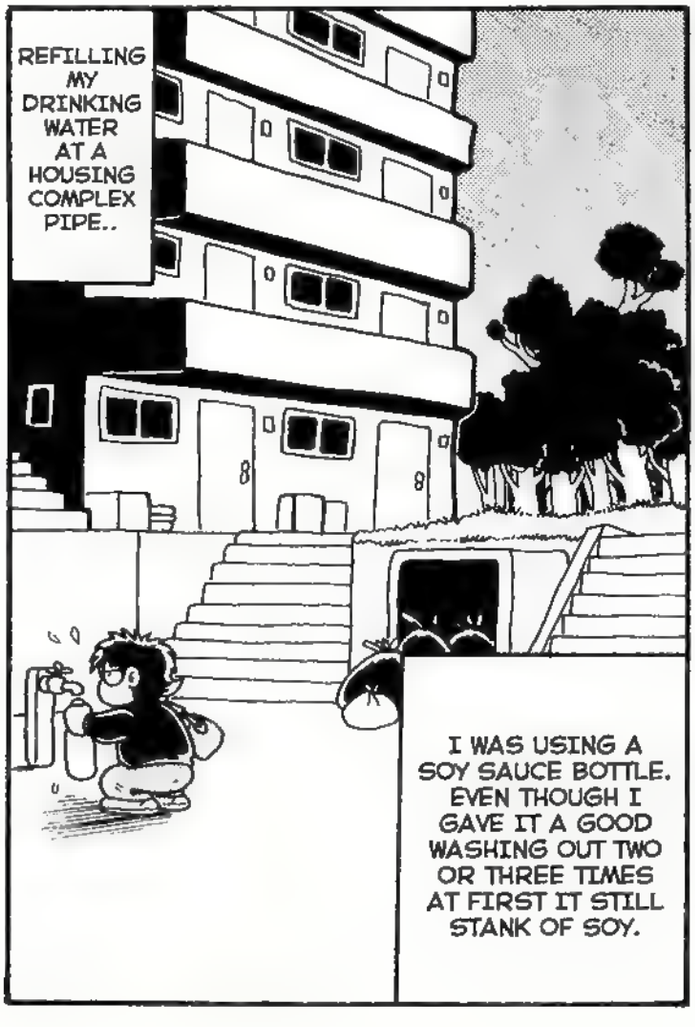

SOME VILLAIN HAD EMPTIED THEIR CAR'S ASHTRAY ONTO THE STREET.
"SNIFF"
THERE WAS DEODORIZER IN IT AND THE SMELL HAD STUCK -- DEFINITELY NOT FOR SMOKING!

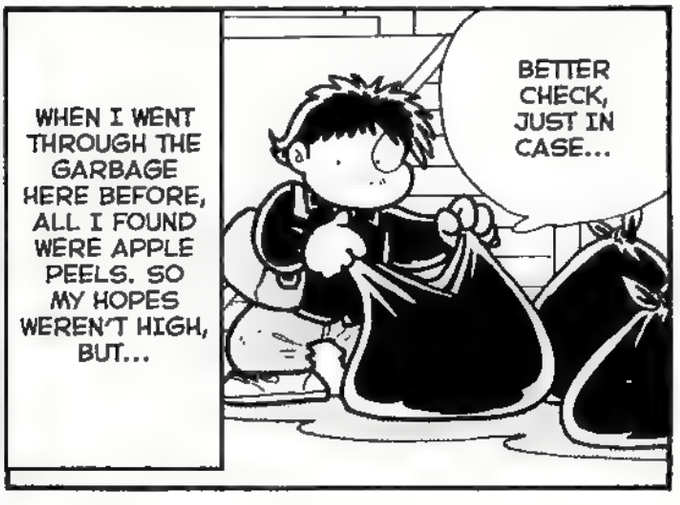

WENT TO SCORE SOME BIKKURIMAN CHOCO.
OOH! THERE'S SOME HERE TODAY TOO!
AIEE!
THDUMP THDUMP

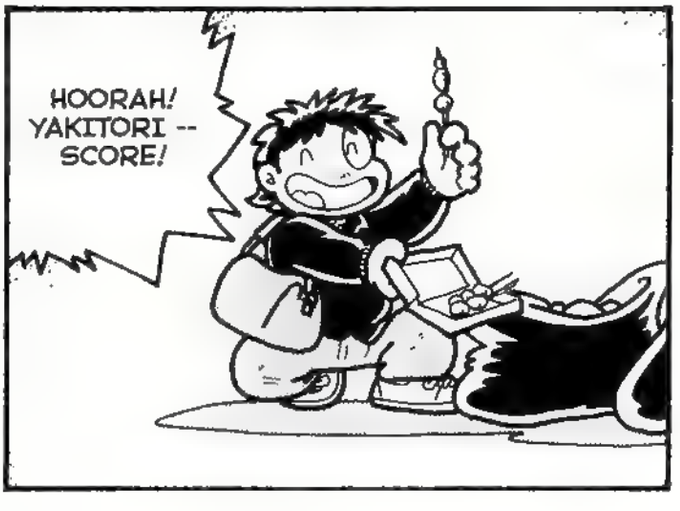
OH, HE'S JUST ASLEEP!
URRR
GET HIS WALLET OUT OF HIS POCKET!
YOU DO IT!
GUH!
TOO SCARED. HOW COULD I.
I'M HO-OME!
I'D HAVE A PRE-DINNER DRINK AND WAIT FOR THE SUN TO COME UP. I KINDA LOOKED FORWARD TO THIS PART.
SINCE I WOULD RANDOMLY SEARCH FOR FOOD IN DARK PLACES, I COULD ONLY REALLY CHECK IT ONCE IT GOT LIGHT.
OOH! IT LOOKS PRETTY GOOD ALL RIGHT! UDON NOODLES WITH TONS OF INGREDIENTS!
CHOPSTICKS I MADE OUT OF BAMBOO
THERE'S A CIGARETTE IN IT?!!


I EAT.
SLLURP
AND A LIGHTER?!!
THERE'S STILL SOME GAS IN IT. IF I DRY IT OUT I CAN USE IT.
NOW, HOW ABOUT THAT BREAD?
COVER-ED IN MOLD.
.....
I PICK OFF THE MOLD.
PICK PICK
A SHEET OF NEWS-PAPER.
GNZZZ
SUN-SHINE DISIN-FECTION.
WHOOROOROO


NIGHT: 5
YAMAHA


REFILLING MY DRINKING WATER AT A HOUSING COMPLEX PIPE..
I WAS USING A SOY SAUCE BOTTLE. EVEN THOUGH I GAVE IT A GOOD WASHING OUT TWO OR THREE TIMES AT FIRST IT STILL STANK OF SOY.


WHEN I WENT THROUGH THE GARBAGE HERE BEFORE, ALL I FOUND WERE APPLE PEELS. SO MY HOPES WEREN'T HIGH, BUT...
BETTER CHECK, JUST IN CASE...

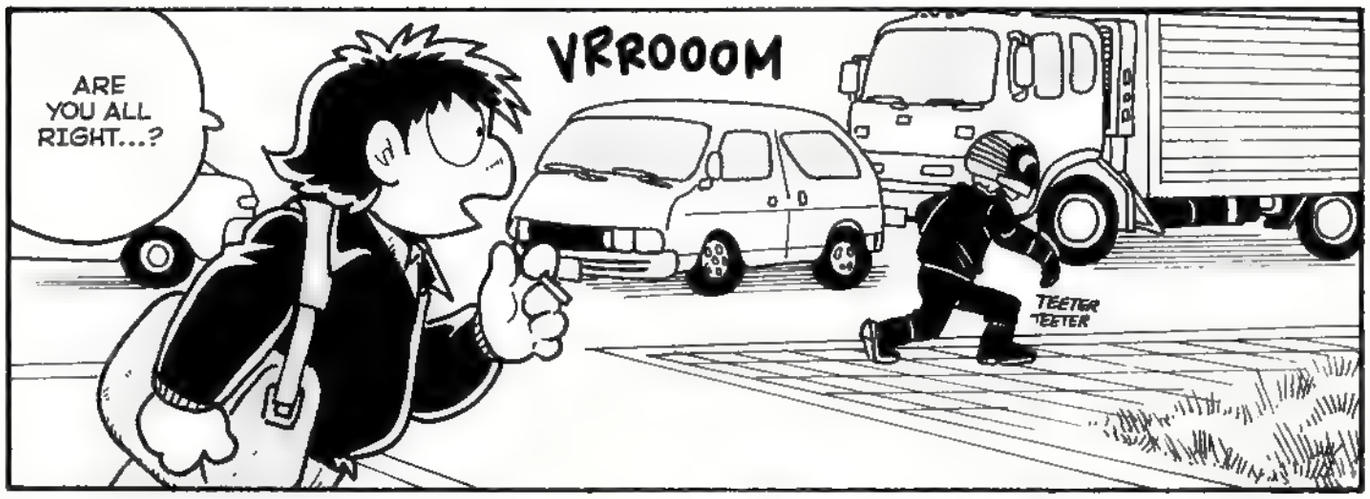

HOORAH! YAKITORI -- SCORE!

I THOUGHT THIS WAS A HOUSING COMPLEX FOR POOR PEOPLE BUT MAYBE SOMEONE GENEROUS HAS MOVED IN!
OOH! APPLES! YESSS!
HUH? THIS IS --
WARM...
THE APPLE HAD ROTTED AND FERMENTED, AND WARMED MY CHILLY HANDS.
MICROBIOLOGY SURE IS AMAZING!
VROOM
PERHAPS I SHOULD TRY CULTIVATING SOME NEW SITE TODAY...
HMM.
JUDGING FROM THESE CONTENTS, I SURMISE THIS GARBAGE CAME FROM AN IZAKAYA
A-HA!

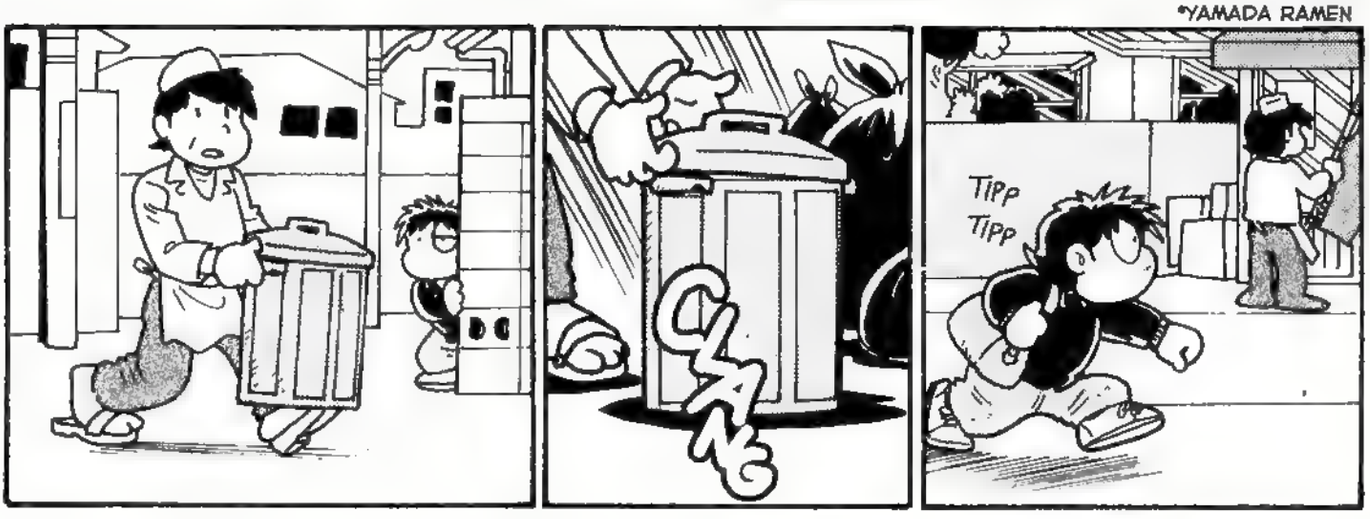
STEAMED SEA BREAM HEAD.
THESE HAVE VERY TASTY EYEBALLS!
THE FLAVOR WAS A BIT STRANGE, BUT I ATE IT.
I GOT TOTALLY SICK AND STAYED IN BED THREE DAYS.
DIDN'T EAT AT ALL
SHIT! I SHOULD SUE THAT PLACE!
TEETER
TEETER
HAVING LEARNT NOTHING, I RUMMAGED IN A NEW PLACE.
OH! COOKIES!
COOKIE
ONE FULL BOX OF COOKIES! YAHOO!
.....
CLOP
CLOP
CLIP
CLOP

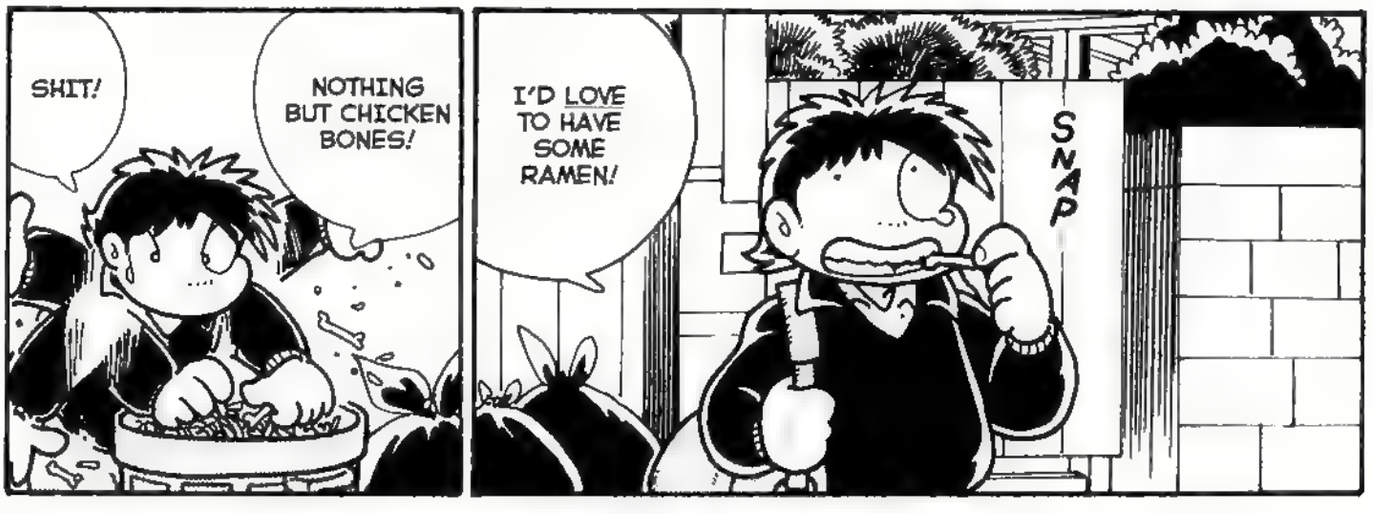
CLIP CLOP
MUNCH SNAP
CRUNCH CRACK
CHOMPCHOMP
NGAM NGAM NGAM
SNAP
I JUST COULDN'T STOP MYSELF AND ATE THE WHOLE BOX IN ONE BREATH.
URRP!
HONK VRRMM
VROOM
SKRRRRR
SKREEE
VROOM

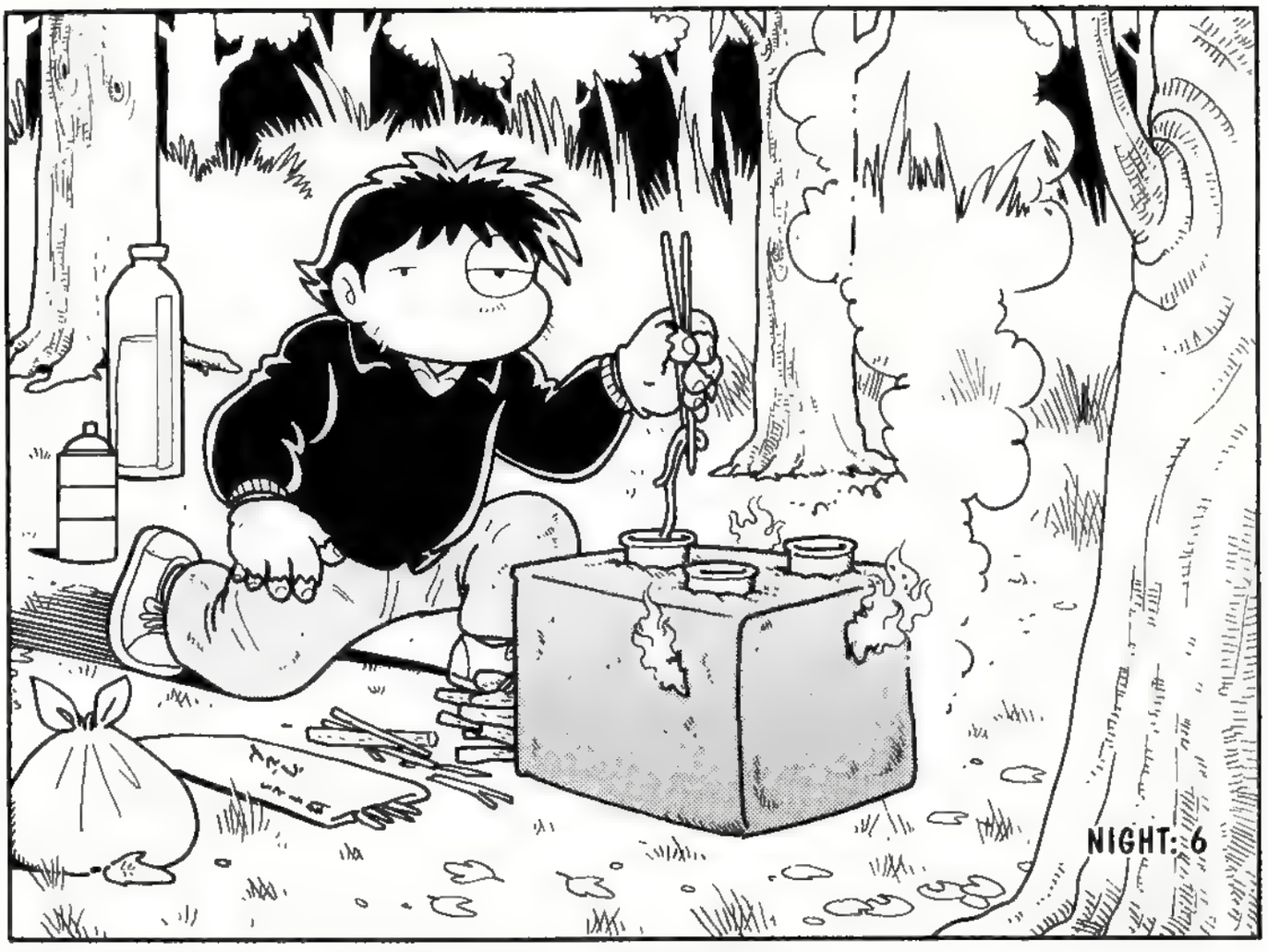
VREEE
KERSMASH
FZK
PHOO
SHFF

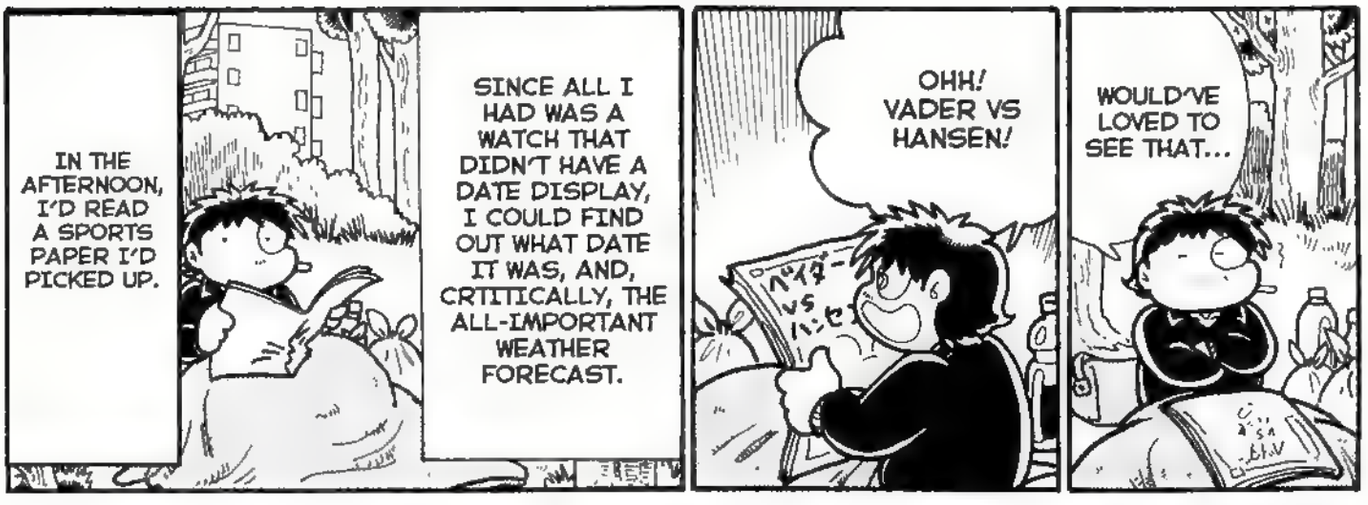


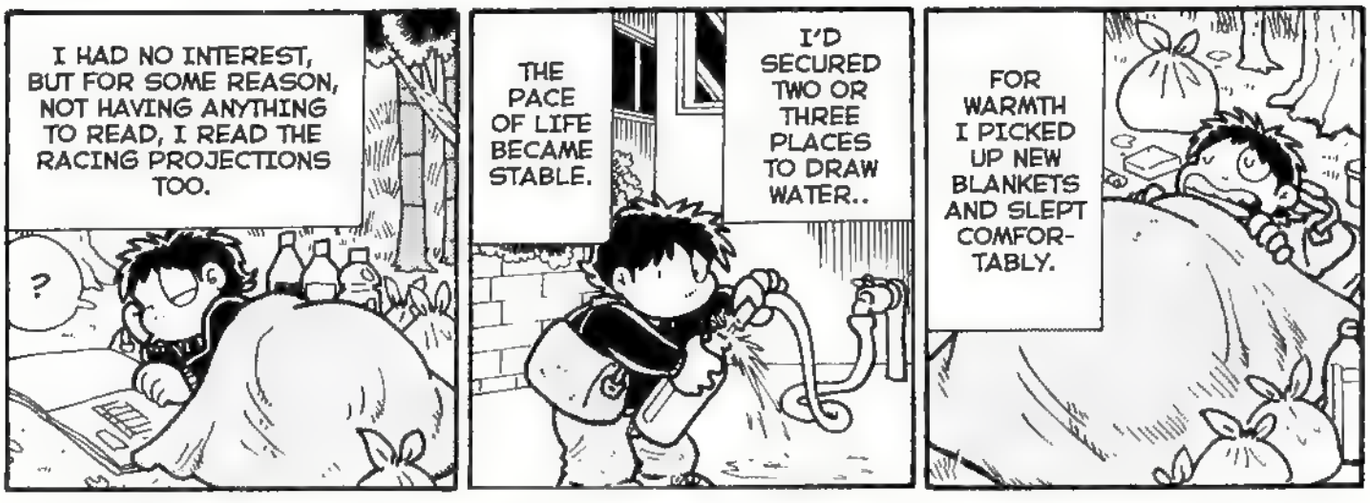
*YAMADA RAMEN






NIGHT: 6

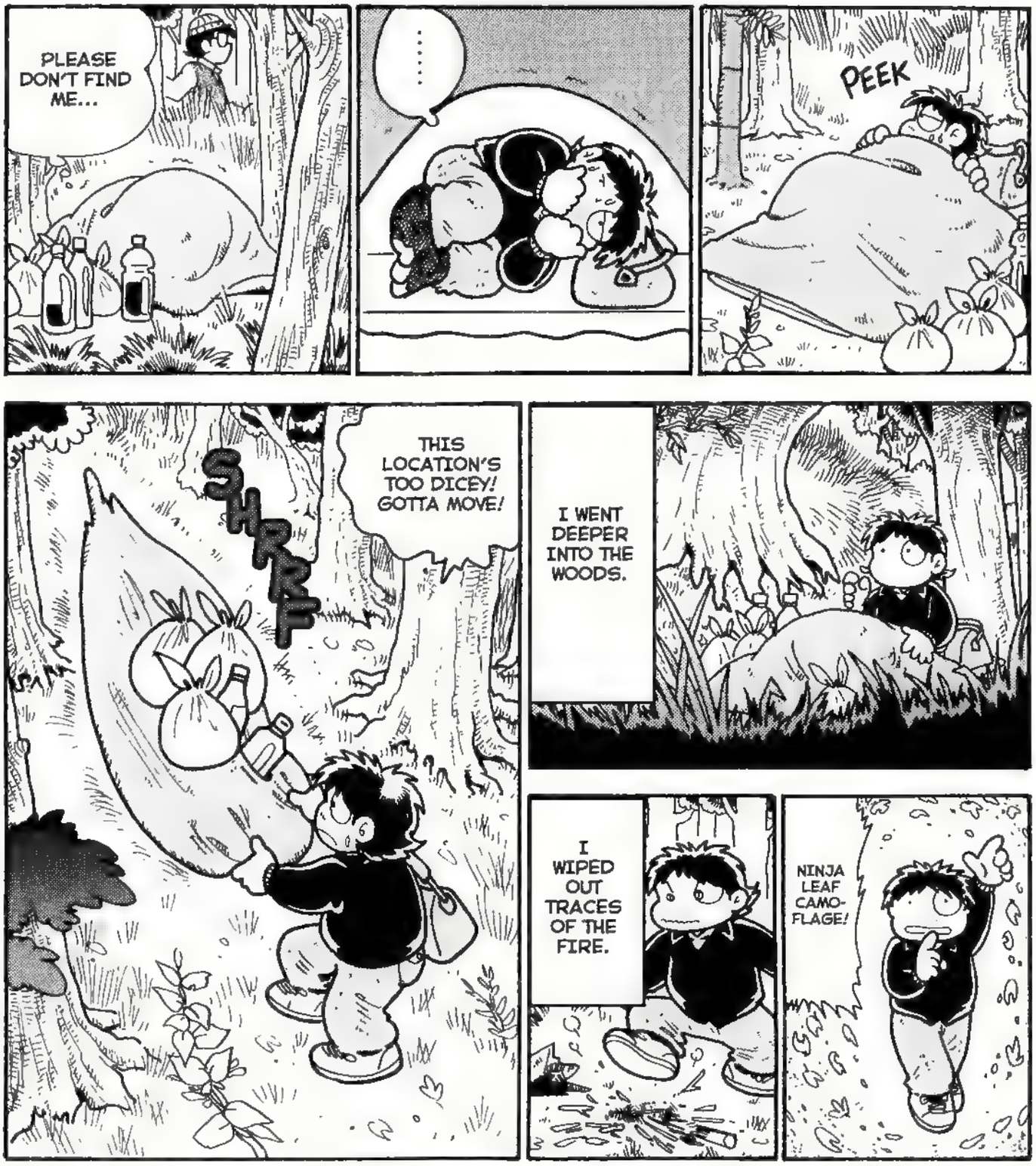

IN THE AFTERNOON, I'D READ A SPORTS PAPER I'D PICKED UP.
SINCE ALL I HAD WAS A WATCH THAT DIDN'T HAVE A DATE DISPLAY, I COULD FIND OUT WHAT DATE IT WAS, AND, CRTITICALLY, THE ALL-IMPORTANT WEATHER FORECAST.
OHH! VADER VS HANSEN!
WOULD'VE LOVED TO SEE THAT...


I HAD NO INTEREST, BUT FOR SOME REASON, NOT HAVING ANYTHING TO READ, I READ THE RACING PROJECTIONS TOO.
?
THE PACE OF LIFE BECAME STABLE.
I'D SECURED TWO OR THREE PLACES TO DRAW WATER..
FOR WARMTH I PICKED UP NEW BLANKETS AND SLEPT COMFOR-TABLY.

I SOMETIMES GOT FLOODED IN THE RAIN THOUGH.
BUT THE WORST WAS ON RAINY DAYS I COULDN'T GO OUT ALL DAY AND HAD TO JUST WRAP MYSELF IN MY SHEET.
IT GOT SO I COULD PREDICT WITH REGULARITY WHAT KIND OF THINGS I'D GET FROM WHAT KIND OF GARBAGE HEAP.
HMM. COOKED FOOD.
...WITH RED KYOTO CARROTS AND A MILD SEASONING...
THIS IS GENUINE CHIKUZENNI! IT HASN'T GONE BAD... WHY IS IT OUT HERE?
DEAR, YOUR MOTHER HAS SENT US COOKED FOOD FROM KYOTO AGAIN! YOU KNOW I HATE THIS STUFF!
FINE, FINE! JUST THROW IT OUT...
MY IMAGINATION ...
TODAY MUST BE CHRISTMAS EVE...
AND THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW WILL BE FRESH GARBAGE DAY...
SNRAEF
PERFECTO! CHICKEN LEG!
WHOOO
! THIS LOOKS PROMI-SING!

HMM. YOU CAN'T EAT THIS RAW...
IF I MAKE FIRES TOO OFTEN IT'LL MAKE ME CONSPICUOUS TO THE HOUSING COMPLEX NEXT DOOR. PLUS, I DON'T HAVE A HOT POT.
IT'LL BE NEW YEAR'S SOON, SO WHILE EVERYONE'S SLEEPING ON THE MORNING OF THE FIRST, MAKING A FIRE WON'T BE A PROBLEM.
I'D BROUGHT THE MANGA ARTIST'S SEVEN TOOLS, INCLUDING A UTILITY KNIFE, MECHANICAL PENCIL, AND SCISSORS.
I CUT OPEN EMPTY BEER CANS WITH THE SCISSORS TO MAKE POTS.
beer
I FOUND A RUSTED, FALLING APART CAN IN THE WOODS...
DEAD BRANCHES
HOLES I'D MADE
KURE 550
WATER
HOTO UDON
SOY SAUCE
FISH BONE
FWOOSH
KRRR
CRAK
CRAK
AH! INCREDIBLE!

HEY! WHAT'S THAT SMOKE?!
URKK!
HSS HSS
MMM!
AHHH! THAT WAS THE FIRST HOT MEAL IN A LONG TIME!
THE NEXT DAY...
SHRAF
!
SNAP
SHFF
SHFF
U--UH OH!
I KNEW IT! LAST NIGHT'S FIRE WAS TOO CONSPICUOUS!
FWAP


PLEASE DON'T FIND ME...
.....
PEEK
SHRRIF
THIS LOCATION'S TOO DICEY! GOTTA MOVE!
I WENT DEEPER INTO THE WOODS.
I WIPED OUT TRACES OF THE FIRE.
NINJA LEAF CAMO-FLAGE!
NO MORE FIRES FOR ME.
MM?

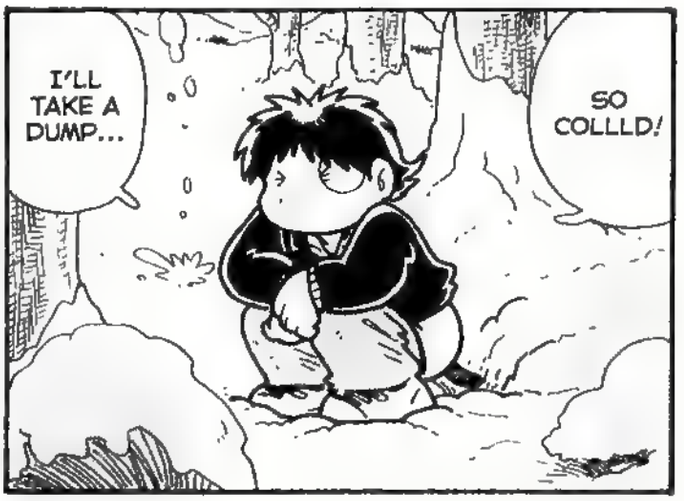
SNOW...

MY FOOTPRINTS WOULD EASILY GIVE ME AWAY.
THEY DON'T PUT OUT GARBAGE AT NEW YEAR'S, AND ALL THE CIGARETTE BUTTS ARE WRECKED BY THE SNOW.

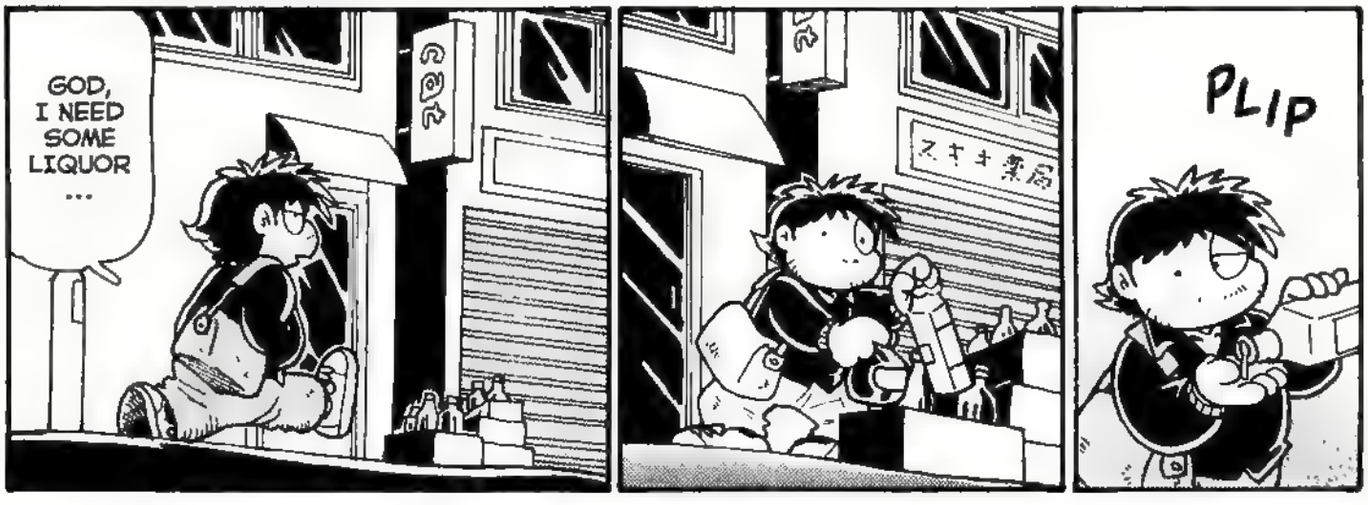
GUESS I JUST HAVE TO HIBERNATE FOR THE WINTER.

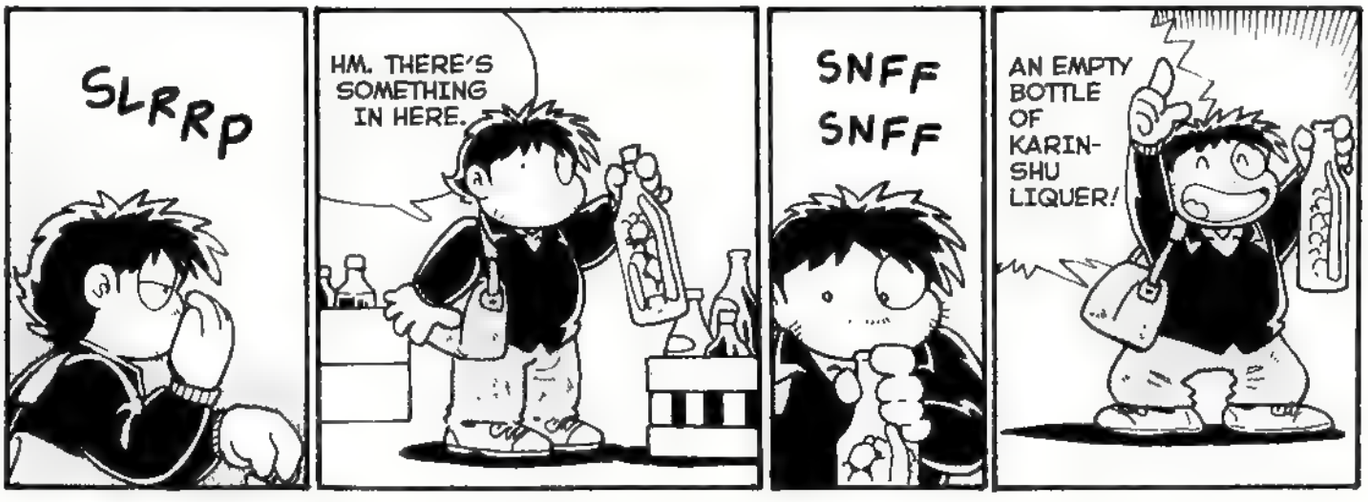
THAT'S THE END OF MY WINE TOO...

SHKK
SHKK


I'LL TAKE A DUMP...
SO COLLLD!

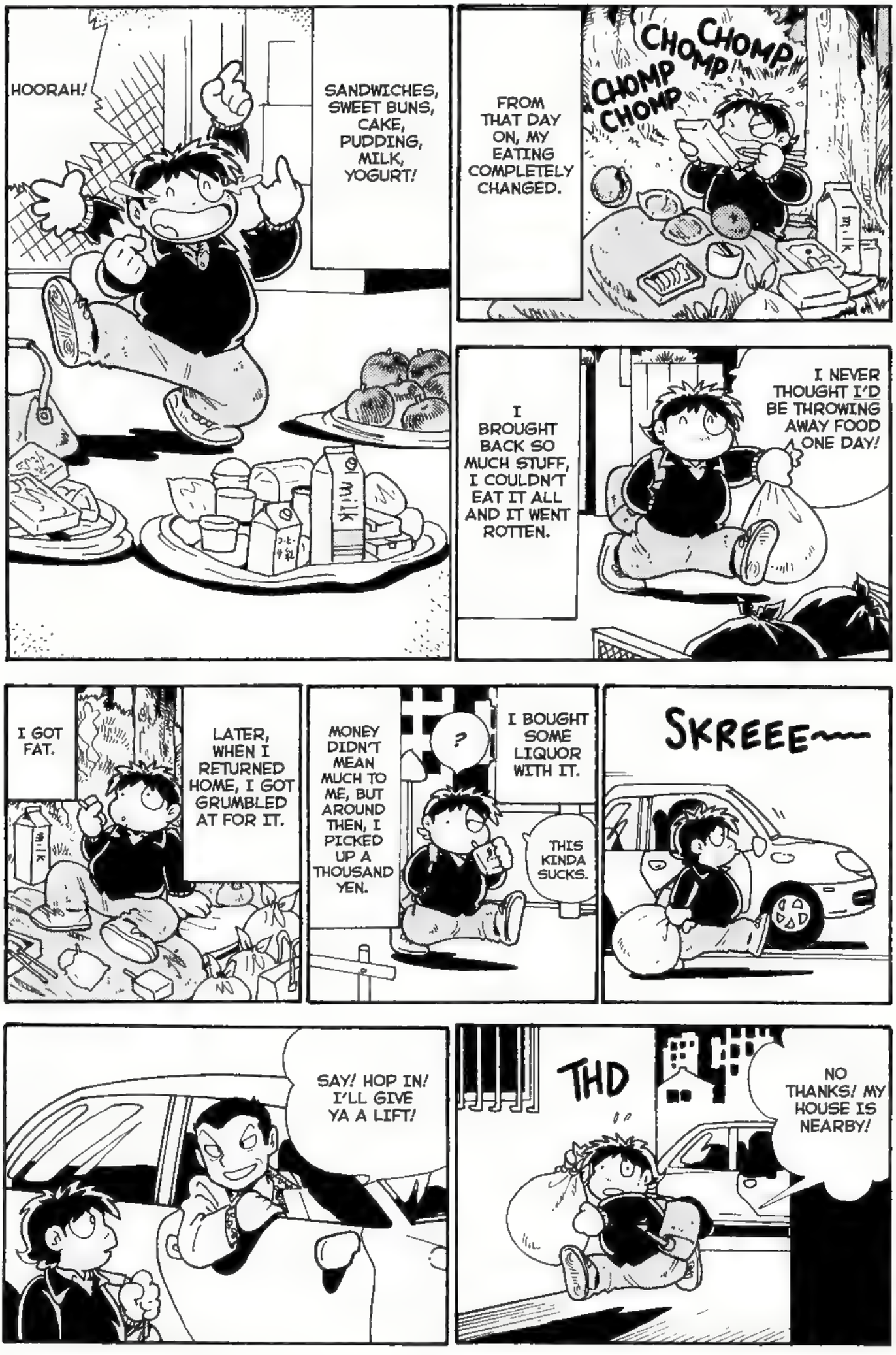
*KEEP LOCKED/YAMADA CABBAGES



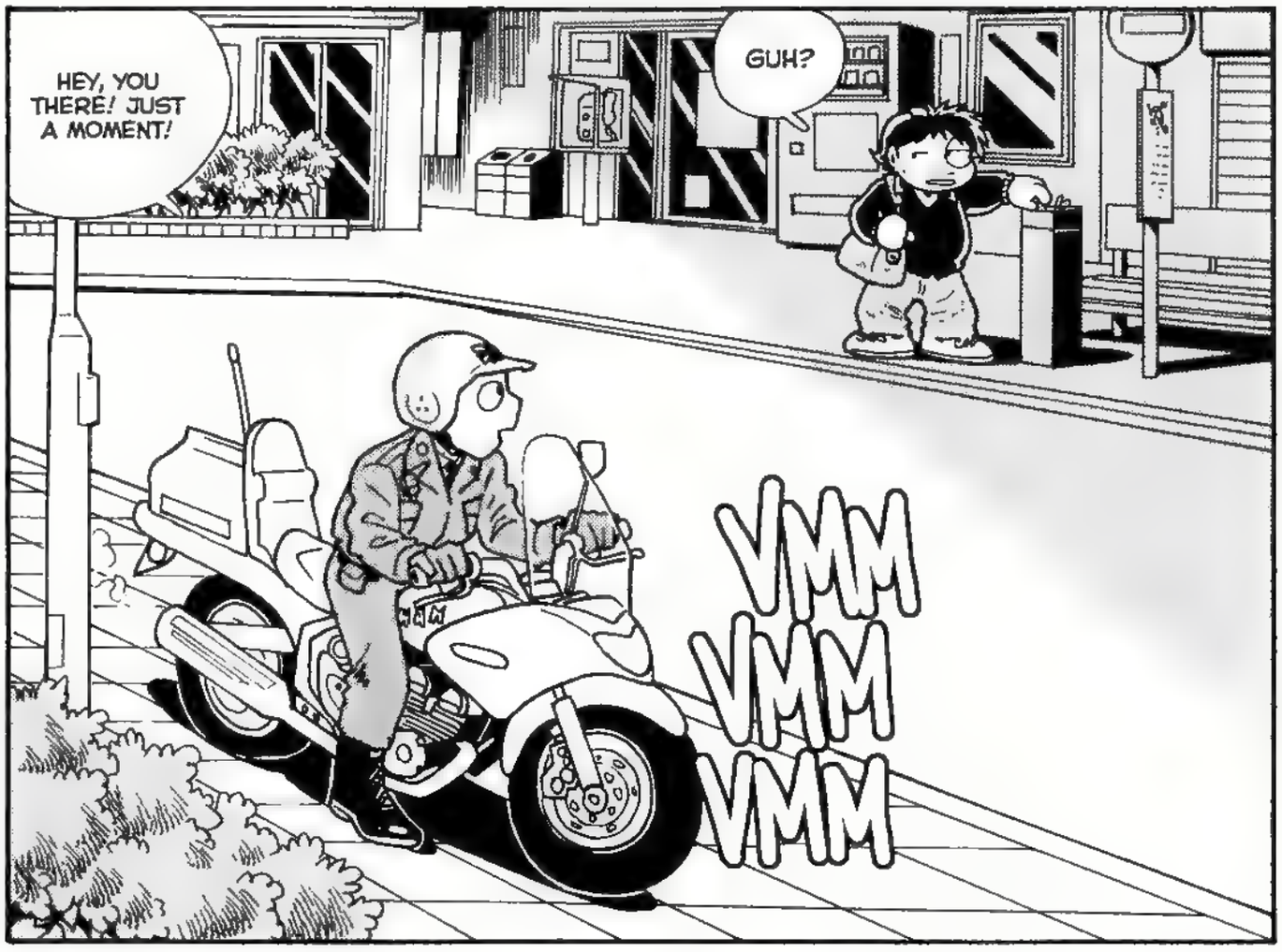


I ADD WATER ...
LEAVE IT OVER NIGHT, AND...
YES! THE SHOCHU THAT WAS SOAKED INTO THE KARIN CAME OUT IN THE WATER! DELICIOUS!
BUT AFTER DOING THIS ABOUT THREE TIMES...
WATER...!
IS THIS FOR REAL?! A BOTTLE OF WHISKEY! IT'S A WHOLE BOTTLE OF WHISKEY!
SHPP
? IT'S ALREADY OPEN?
SNFF SNIFF
GHH! KEROSENE!
AN EMPTY FOOD CAN, A STRING FROM SOME TATTERED CLOTH
KERO-SENE
I MADE A LAMP!
Bier
PLUS, I MADE A TRIVET, AND COOKED SOME RAMEN THAT I'D PICKED UP.
PLP
PLPPP
SLRRP
AFTER AN HOUR, I HAD FRESHLY COOKED RAMEN.

THAT NIGHT, I GOT MY FOOD AND CIGARETTE BUTTS IN NO TIME, SO I WENT FOR A LITTLE EXCURSION.
A CERTAIN LARGE SUPERMARKET CHAIN.
うまげや
WHOA! THERE'S AN UMAGEYA OUT HERE?
.....
WONDER IF THEY HAVE ANY OUT-OF-DATE FOOD?
I SHOULD BE SO LUCKY...
KCHAK
UMA-GEYA'S GARBAGE BAGS ARE WHITE.
SHRRF
YAHOO!
MAGINIFICENT APPLES OF EVERY VARIETY, STILL PERFECTLY EDIBLE.
YESSS!
BENTOS, RICE BALLS, READY-TO-EAT FOODS.


HOORAH!
SANDWICHES, SWEET BUNS, CAKE, PUDDING, MILK, YOGURT!
FROM THAT DAY ON, MY EATING COMPLETELY CHANGED.
CHOMP
CHOMP
CHOMP
CHOMP
I BROUGHT BACK SO MUCH STUFF, I COULDN'T EAT IT ALL AND IT WENT ROTTEN.
I NEVER THOUGHT I'D BE THROWING AWAY FOOD ONE DAY!
I GOT FAT.
LATER, WHEN I RETURNED HOME, I GOT GRUMBLED AT FOR IT.
MONEY DIDN'T MEAN MUCH TO ME, BUT AROUND THEN, I PICKED UP A THOUSAND YEN.
?
I BOUGHT SOME LIQUOR WITH IT.
THIS KINDA SUCKS.
SKREEE~~
SAY! HOP IN! I'LL GIVE YA A LIFT!
THD
NO THANKS! MY HOUSE IS NEARBY!

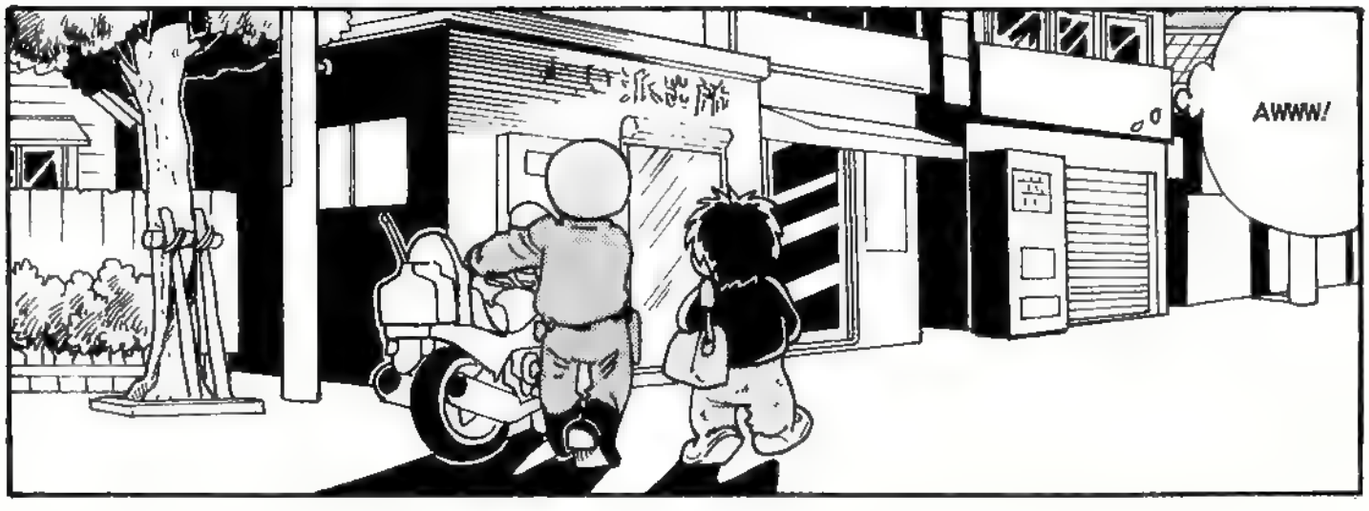
TO THIS DAY IT'S A MYSTERY TO ME WHO THE STRANGER WAS THAT CALLED ME OVER WHEN HE COULD CLEARLY SEE THAT I WAS HOMELESS.
I'D BEEN FISHING THROUGH GARBAGE, AND OF COURSE I HADN'T BATHED, SO I WAS INCREDIBLY FILTHY.
DID HE WANT MY ORGANS? TO BUY MY OFFICIAL REGISTRATION? WAS HE FROM NORTH KOREA?
SINCE FOOD PROVISIONS ARE NO LONGER AN ISSUE, NOW I HAVE TO FIND CIGARETTES AND LIQUOR!
NOW THAT I HAD SOME FREE TIME, I BEGAN BROADENING MY TERRITORY.
I WENT AS FAR AS THE TRAIN STATION AND GOT SOME CIGARETTE BUTTS.
WHOA... THERE'S EVEN A HAMBURGER PLACE IN FRONT OF THE STATION?!
I SOMETIMES WISH FOR THAT...
HE MUST BE TOSSING OUT SOME OUT-OF-DATE STUFF...
KLANNG
TIGHT SECURITY!
THEY'RE ON NIGHTSHIFT TOO. IT'S HOPELESS ...
EM-PLOYEES ENJOYING THEM-SELVES.
I SHOULD LOOK FOR BUTTS AT THE BUS STOP. THERE'S ALWAYS SOME LONG ONES THERE.

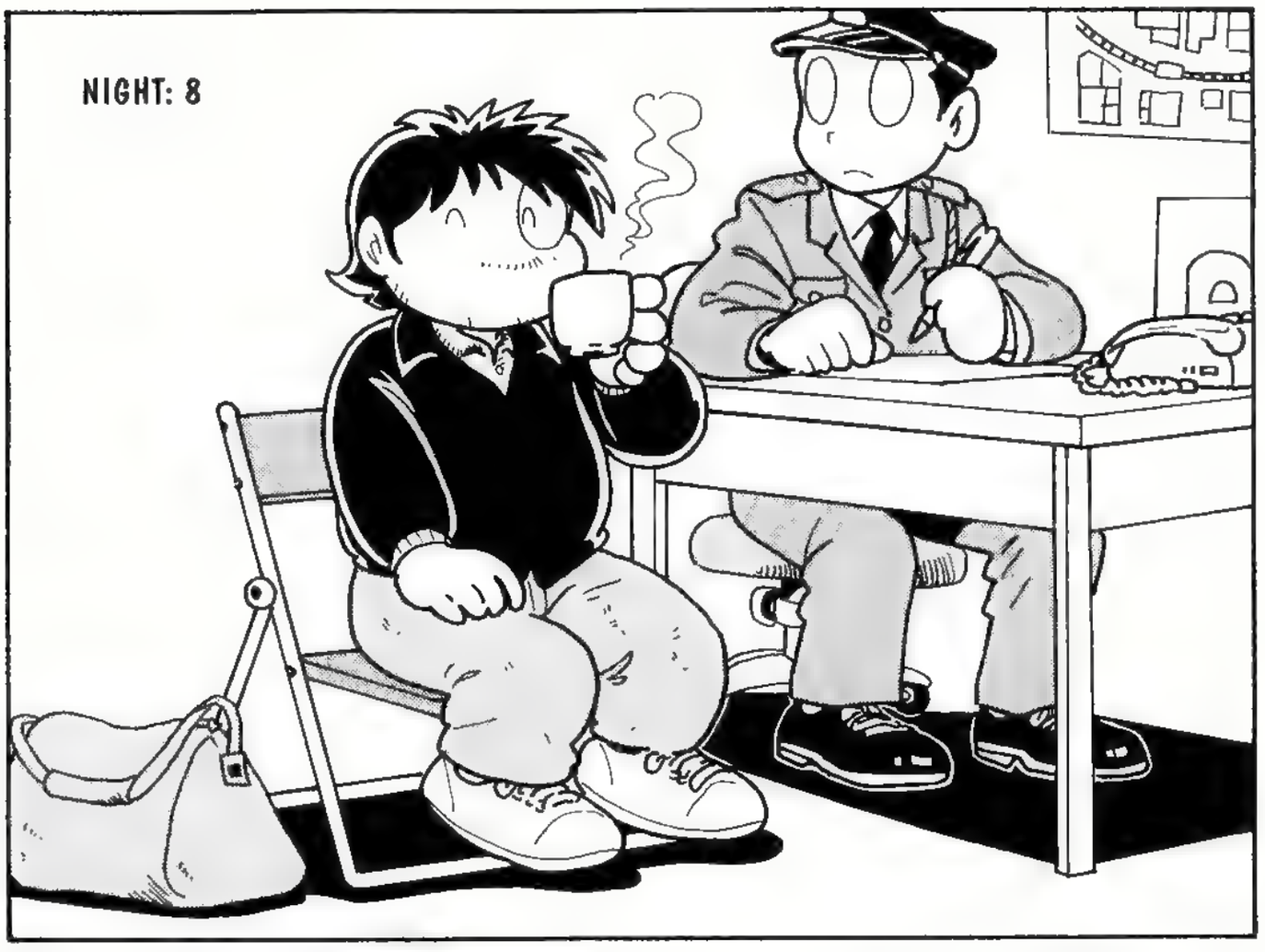

HEY, YOU THERE! JUST A MOMENT!
GUH?
VMM
VMM
VMM

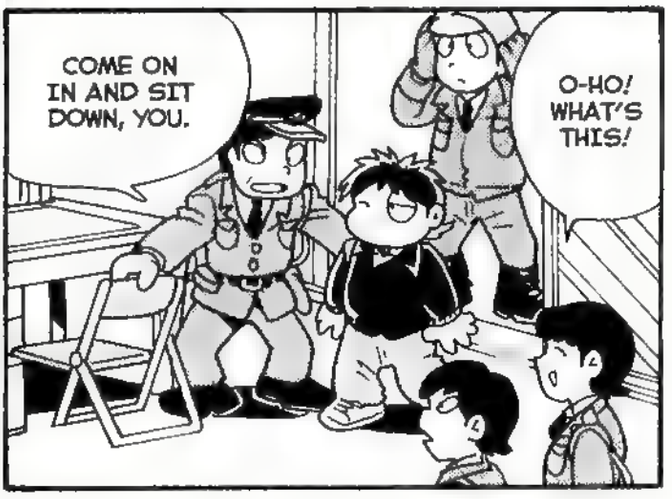
GRRAH! I'M SO CARELESS!

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
UHH... SHOPPING, PERHAPS?

LET'S TALK AT THE POLICE BOOTH. IT'S RIGHT OVER THERE.

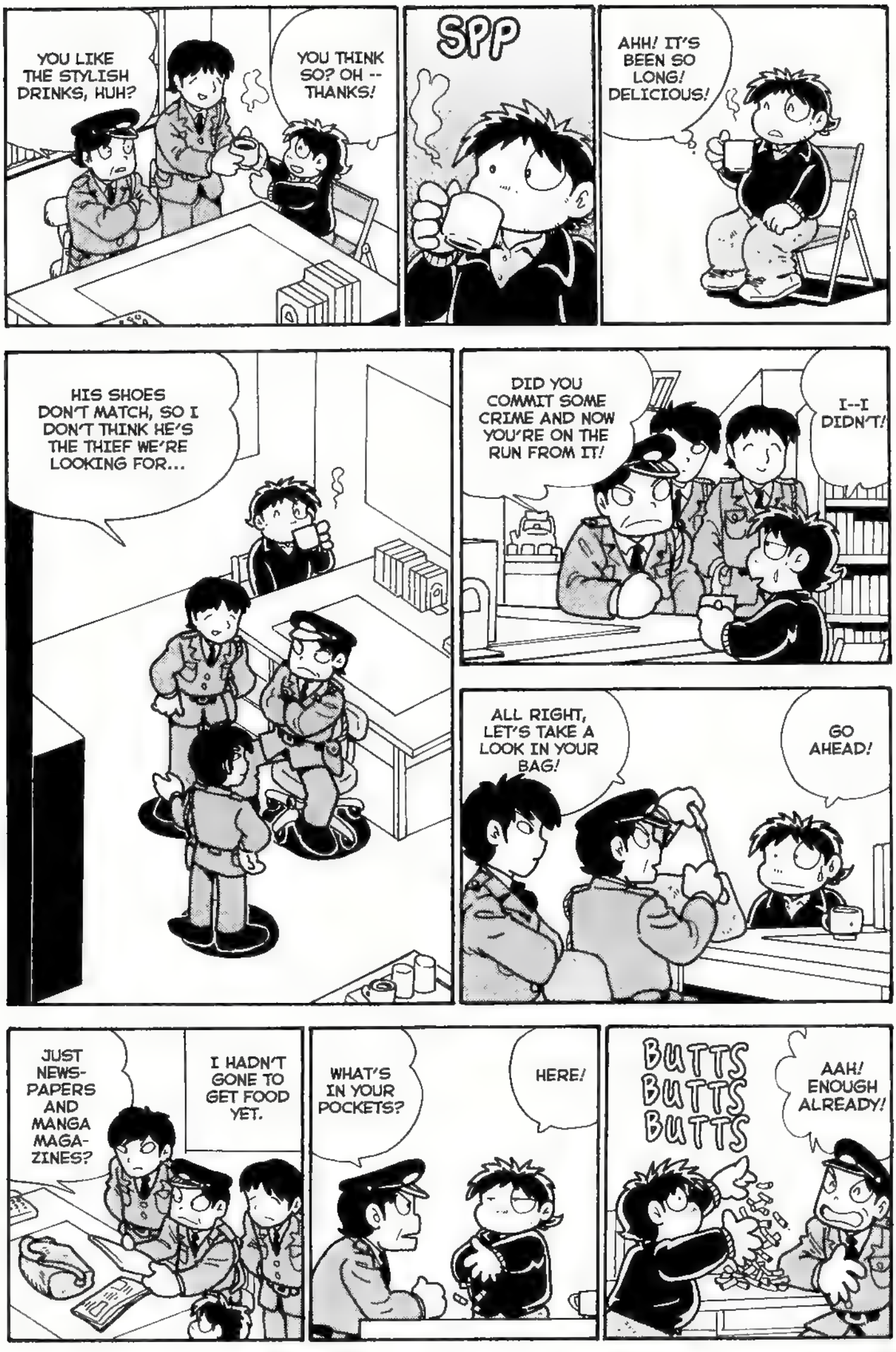

AWWW!





*BEWARE OF GROPERS

SHOW ME YOUR SHOES!
WELL?
HMM...
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THEM, HUH!
IS THIS THE ONLY PAIR OF SHOES YOU'VE GOT?
THIS IS IT!
WHY WERE YOU LOITERING AROUND HERE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT? WHERE'S YOUR HOME?
WELL, LIKE, IN THE WOODS...
A BEGGAR, EH?
I--I AM?!
FOUND: ONE BEGGAR...
WRITE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ON HERE!
COPS'RE CREEEEPY!
RUN A CHECK ON THIS NAME.
YES, SIR!
ISN'T IT COLD SLEEPING IN THE WOODS FOR TWO MONTHS?
YEAH, IT IS COLD.
SUZUKI, GET SOMETHING WARM FOR THIS GUY.
DO YOU MIND COFFEE OR TEA?
OH! WELL... COFFEE, BLACK.


YOU LIKE THE STYLISH DRINKS, HUH?
YOU THINK SO? OH -- THANKS!
SPP
AHH! IT'S BEEN SO LONG! DELICIOUS!
HIS SHOES DON'T MATCH, SO I DON'T THINK HE'S THE THIEF WE'RE LOOKING FOR...
DID YOU COMMIT SOME CRIME AND NOW YOU'RE ON THE RUN FROM IT!
I--I DIDN'T!
ALL RIGHT, LET'S TAKE A LOOK IN YOUR BAG!
GO AHEAD!
JUST NEWS-PAPERS AND MANGA MAGA-ZINES?
I HADN'T GONE TO GET FOOD YET.
WHAT'S IN YOUR POCKETS?
HERE!
BUTTS BUTTS BUTTS
AAH! ENOUGH ALREADY!

WALLET!
YOU'VE GOT 350 YEN HERE. YOU LIFTED IT FROM SOMEWHERE, DIDN'T YOU!
I JUST FOUND IT. IN FACT, IT'S CHANGE AFTER BUYING LIQUOR.
YOU STOLE IT FROM A TEMPLE MONEY BOX, DIDN'T YOU!
IF YOU LIKE, YOU CAN STAY A NIGHT AND WE CAN TALK MORE!
YOU'LL GET THREE MEALS IN A HOLDING CELL, PLUS IT'S WARM!
OH!
PLEASE YES, IF I CAN!
PHONE. IT'S THE SECTION CHIEF!
YES... THAT'S RIGHT... ONE POSSIBLE SUSPECT...
HE HAS NO PREVIOUS RECORD, BUT...
HE'S SUSPICIOUS, SO WE OUGHT TO HOLD HIM FOR NOW...
WE CAN'T?
WELL, BEGGING USED TO BE A CRIME BEFORE...
WHAT THE--?! CRIME--?!
OH, I SEE... UNDERSTOOD.

THERE'S A MISSING PERSONS REQUEST OUT FOR YOU!
WE'RE TAKING YOU OVER TO HEADQUARTERS.
AT XX STATION ...
WHEN I TALKED TO YOUR WIFE ON THE PHONE, SHE SAID YOU WERE A MANGA ARTIST.
WELL, YES...
DRAW SOME-THING FOR ME?
WOW ...!
YOU'RE A REAL PRO!
THAT'S A CUTE GIRL YOU'RE DRAWING!
GO CALL H-TA. HE'S INTO THIS "LOLITA" STUFF -- HE MIGHT KNOW HIM!
EVEN THE COPS TOO, HUH?
HOW DID A PERSON LIKE YOU END UP LIKE THIS...
WH--WHAT CAN I SAY? I JUST COULDN'T DRAW ANYMORE...
MISTER AZUMA?!!
KTAAK
Y-- YES...

I'LL GO BUY SOME COLORED PAPER!
AFTER THAT, I WAS EARNESTLY REMONS-TRATED.
YOU'LL HAVE TO WAIT A WHILE FOR YOUR WIFE TO ARRIVE.
WOULD YOU LIKE SOME DANGO
THANKS!
I'LL PUT SOME INSTANT RAMEN IN YOUR BAG AS A SOUVENIR, OKAY?
I APPRECIATE IT BUT... WHY?!
I BOUGHT SOME COLORED PAPER! SIR, PLEASE! IF YOU COULD JUST DRAW A LINE OR TWO!
I'VE GOT A LITTLE KID AT HOME, SO COULD I GET YOU TO WRITE A WORD HERE...
SO ANYWAY, I WROTE IT...
夢
"DREAM"...
SAY WHAT?!

WALKING
AROUND TOWN

065
TOWN: 1

072
TOWN: 2

079
TOWN: 3

086
TOWN: 4

090
TOWN: 5

094
TOWN: 6

104
TOWN: 7

111
TOWN: 8

114
TOWN: 9

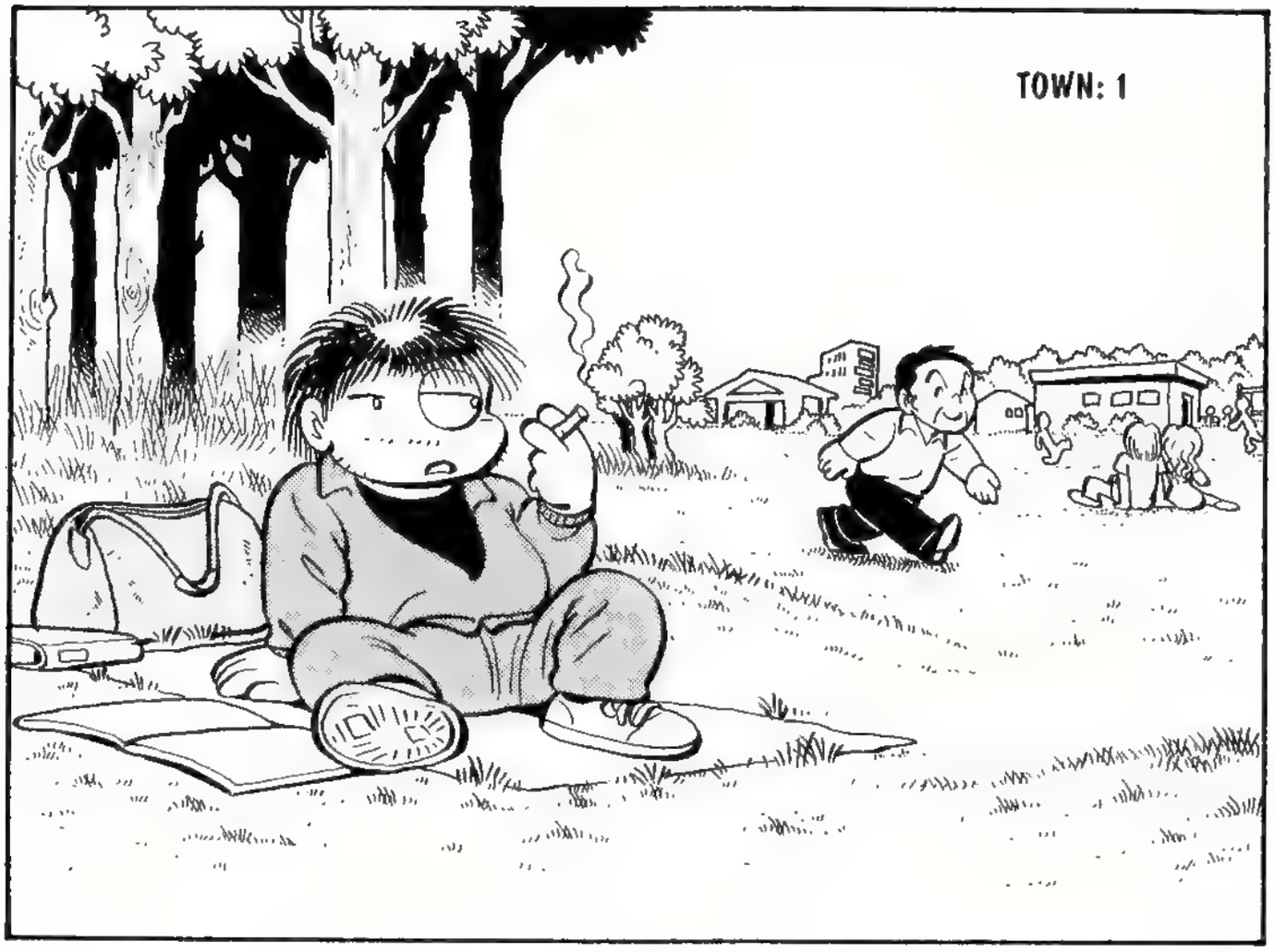
118
TOWN: 10

121
TOWN: 11

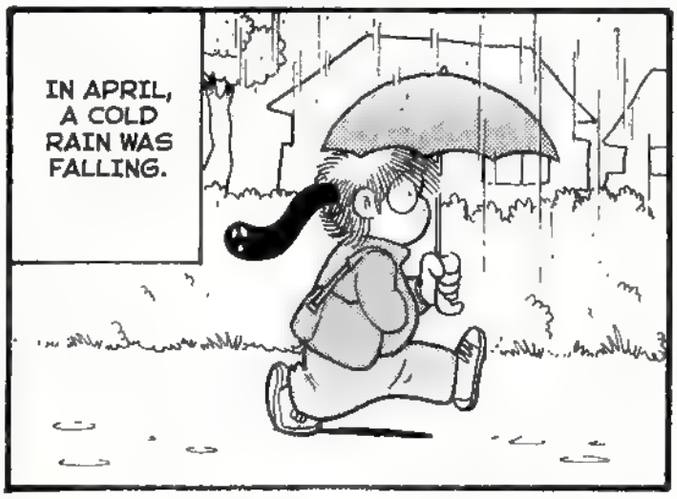
127
TOWN: 12

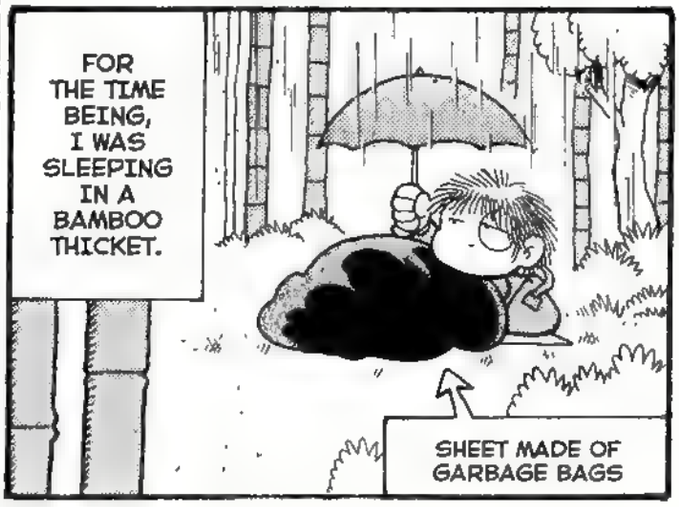
133
TOWN: 13

139
TOWN: 14

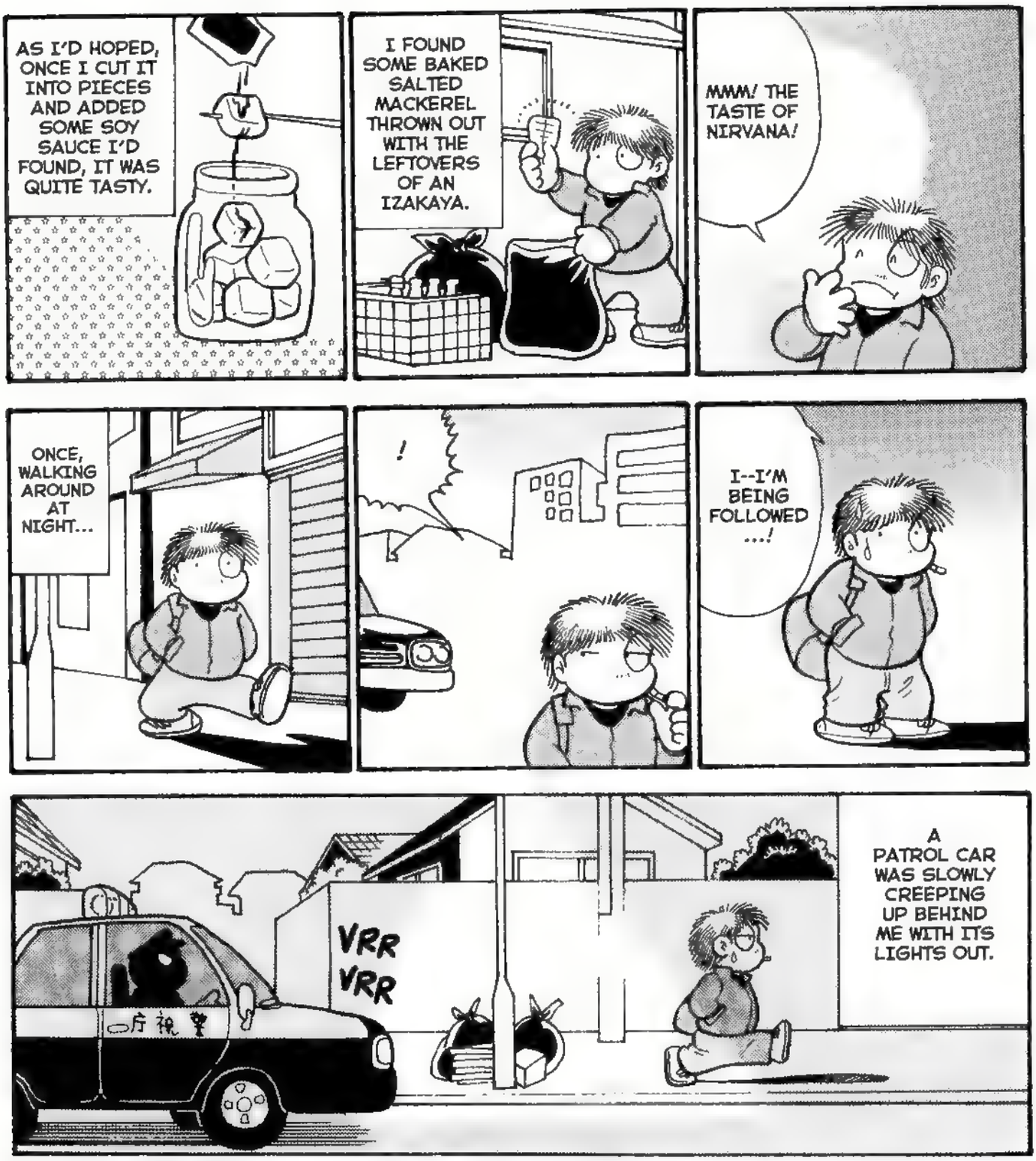

TOWN: 1

IN APRIL OF '92 IN SPITE OF ALL I WENT THROUGH TO RETURN TO WORK, YET AGAIN, I DUMPED MY PROJECTS AND TOOK OFF.
SOMETHING GROWING OUT OF MY HEAD MADE ME DO IT.
SORRY TO MY EDITORS FROM THIS PERIOD TOO.

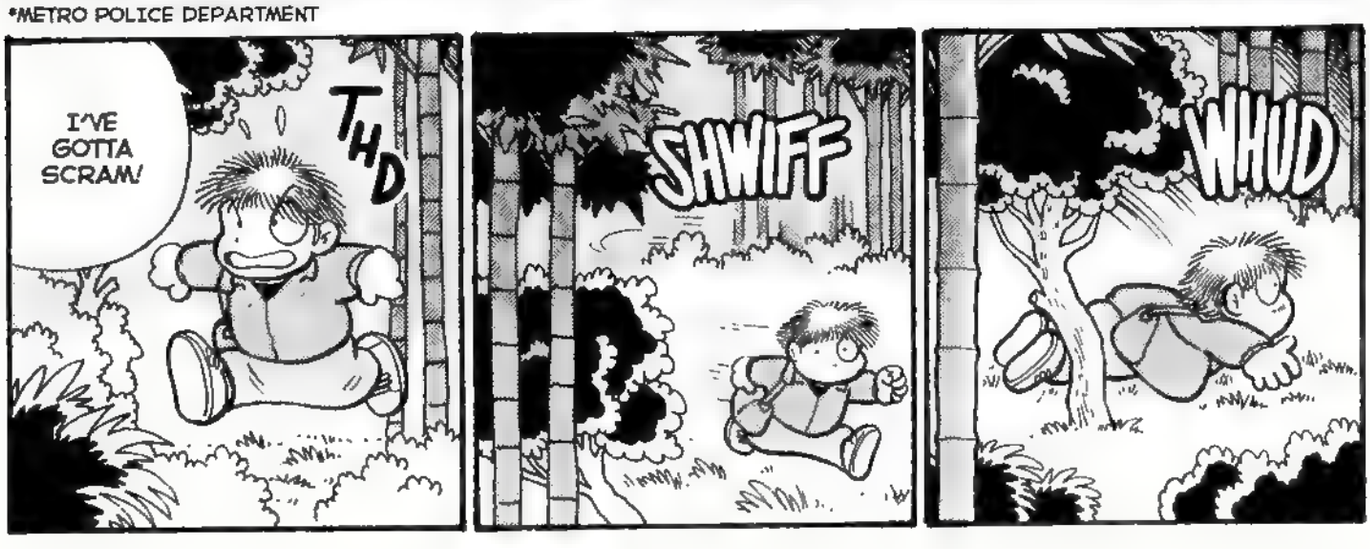

IN APRIL, A COLD RAIN WAS FALLING.


FOR THE TIME BEING, I WAS SLEEPING IN A BAMBOO THICKET.
SHEET MADE OF GARBAGE BAGS

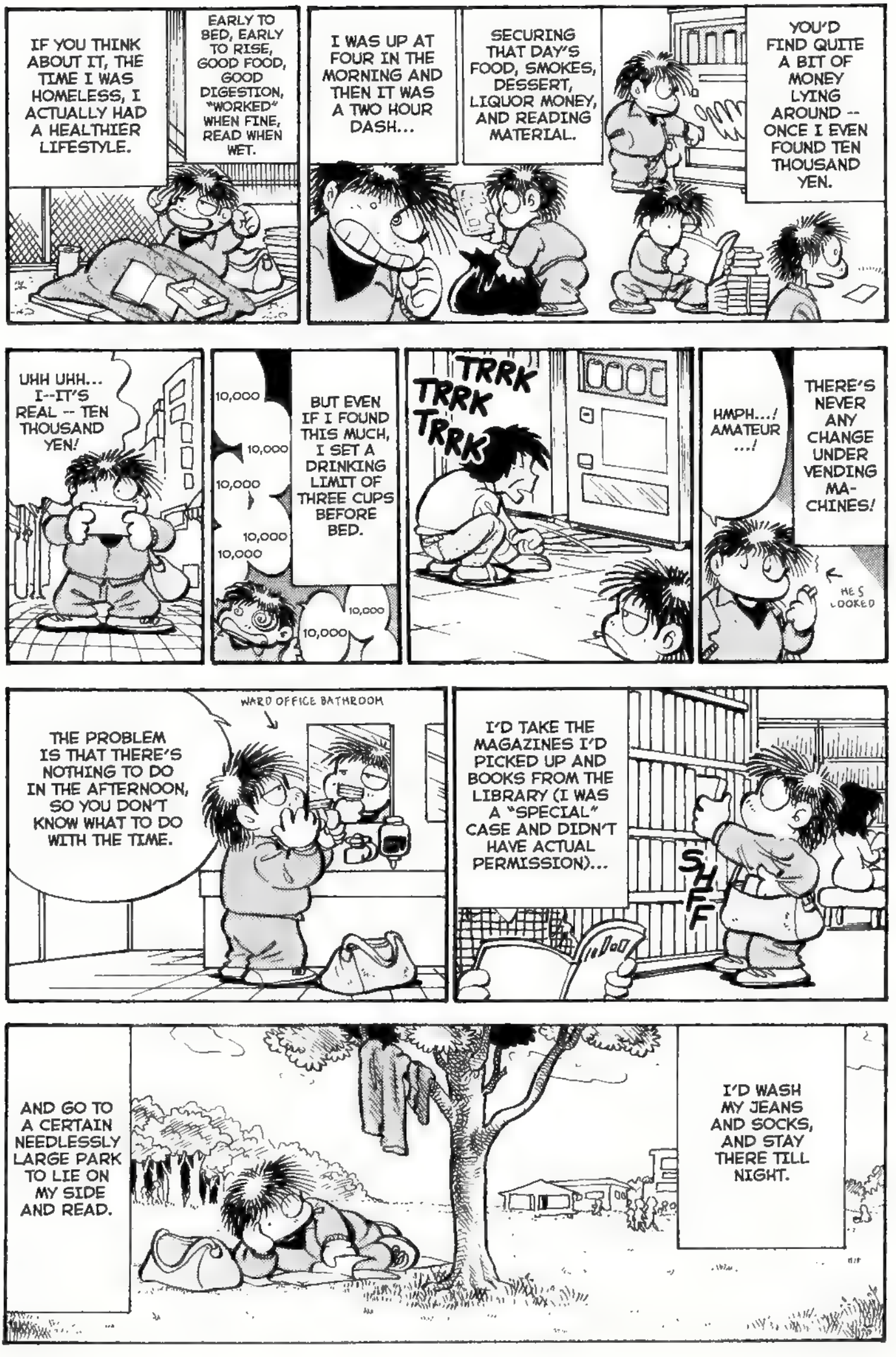
POK
POK
POK
POK
POK
AHH...
SHK
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?!
OHH, NOTHING IN PARTICULAR REALLY.
SINCE I HAD NOTHING TO DO, I WALKED AROUND ALL DAY.
WALKED UNTIL MY KNEES TURNED TO JELLY.
DOING THAT WIPED ME OUT, SO I COULD GET TO SLEEP WITHOUT EVEN HAVING TO DRINK.
DIDN'T HAVE A SINGLE YEN FOR ALCOHOL
BEHIND A RAMEN SHOP I PICKED UP SOME USED PORK FAT.
FWUB
FWUB


AS I'D HOPED, ONCE I CUT IT INTO PIECES AND ADDED SOME SOY SAUCE I'D FOUND, IT WAS QUITE TASTY.
I FOUND SOME BAKED SALTED MACKEREL THROWN OUT WITH THE LEFTOVERS OF AN IZAKAYA.
MMM! THE TASTE OF NIRVANA!
ONCE, WALKING AROUND AT NIGHT...
!
I--I'M BEING FOLLOWED ...!
VRR VRR
A PATROL CAR WAS SLOWLY CREEPING UP BEHIND ME WITH ITS LIGHTS OUT.

*METRO POLICE DEPARTMENT

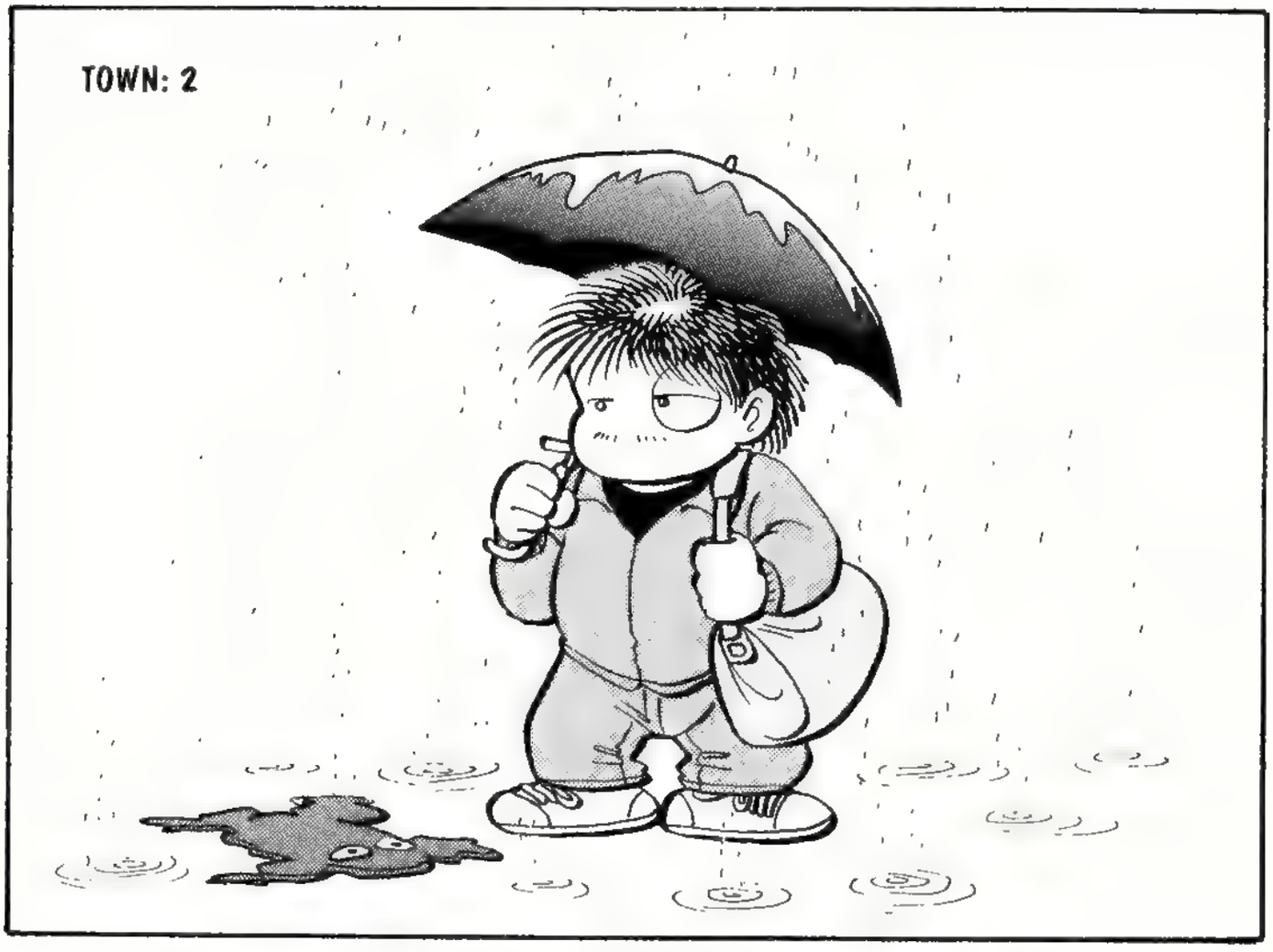


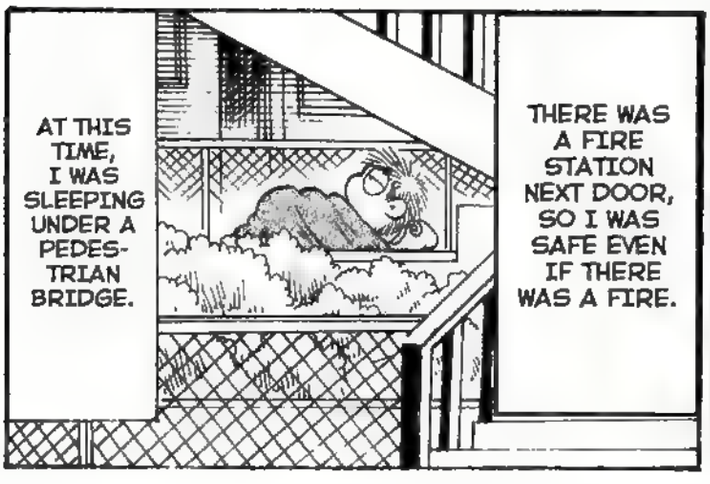
SHIT! WHERE'D HE GO?
WE LOST 'IM!
COME ON! LET'S GO...
PROBABLY JUST A BEGGAR.
BETTER NOT CALL ME A BEGGAR!
THEY MIGHT'VE SUSPECTED ME FOR A COP STABBING INCIDENT THAT'D HAPPENED AROUND THAT TIME.
BUT I HAVEN'T DONE ANYTHING WRONG!
ALTHOUGH, I HAD SWIPED SOME BEER FROM A CASE OUTSIDE A PUB.
OOH! THERE'S BEER IN IT!
BUT I DON'T HAVE A BOTTLE OPENER!
NO BIG DEAL!
THE STUMP OF A CUT BAMBOO.
KTONK
HUMAN INTELLECT CONQUERS ALL!
AFTER-WARDS, I WENT TO LIVE IN A DIFFERENT TOWN...

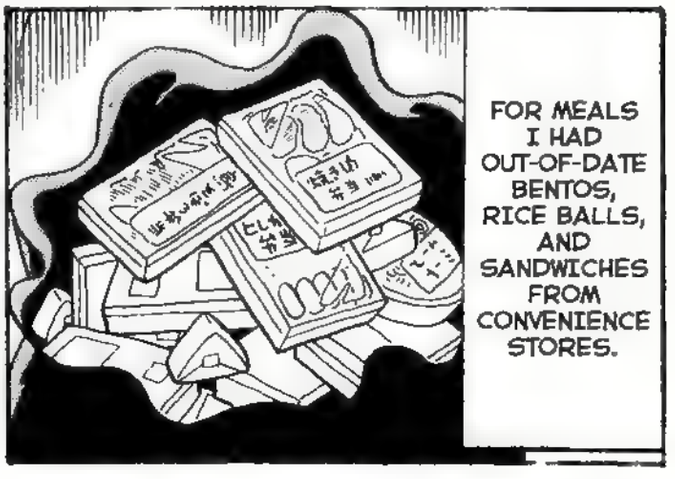

IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT, THE TIME I WAS HOMELESS, I ACTUALLY HAD A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE.
EARLY TO BED, EARLY TO RISE, GOOD FOOD, GOOD DIGESTION, "WORKED" WHEN FINE, READ WHEN WET.
I WAS UP AT FOUR IN THE MORNING AND THEN IT WAS A TWO HOUR DASH...
SECURING THAT DAY'S FOOD, SMOKES, DESSERT, LIQUOR MONEY, AND READING MATERIAL.
YOU'D FIND QUITE A BIT OF MONEY LYING AROUND -- ONCE I EVEN FOUND TEN THOUSAND YEN.
UHH UHH... I--IT'S REAL -- TEN THOUSAND YEN!
10,000
BUT EVEN IF I FOUND THIS MUCH, I SET A DRINKING LIMIT OF THREE CUPS BEFORE BED.
TRRK TRRK TRRK
HMPH.../ AMATEUR .../
THERE'S NEVER ANY CHANGE UNDER VENDING MA-CHINES!
HE'S LOOKED
WARD OFFICE BATHROOM
THE PROBLEM IS THAT THERE'S NOTHING TO DO IN THE AFTERNOON, SO YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THE TIME.
I'D TAKE THE MAGAZINES I'D PICKED UP AND BOOKS FROM THE LIBRARY (I WAS A "SPECIAL" CASE AND DIDN'T HAVE ACTUAL PERMISSION)...
SHFF
AND GO TO A CERTAIN NEEDLESSLY LARGE PARK TO LIE ON MY SIDE AND READ.
I'D WASH MY JEANS AND SOCKS, AND STAY THERE TILL NIGHT.

?
UNDERWEAR ONLY
HE SAT IN THIS POSE FOR TWO HOURS.
HMPH. SOME KINDA ARTIST, I GUESS...
AFTER A WHILE, A PATROL CAR AND AMBULANCE CAME AND TOOK THE ARTIST AWAY.
CHANK CHANK
WHUD WHUD WHUD
GAR-BAGE BIN
CHANK CHANK
KTUNK
GZZZ
HE'S ASLEEP.
IN THE EVENINGS, THIS BRISK-WALKING OLD MAN WOULD ALWAYS SHOW UP.
HE WAS LITTLE AND HUNCHED FORWARD, BUT HE WALKED REAL FAST.
SHFF
SHFF
SHFF

WHENEVER HE SPOTTED A COUPLE HE'D START THIS PASSIONATE SPEECH ABOUT SOMETHING.
THIS MYSTERIOUS OLD GUY WOULD DO THIS ENDLESSLY.
BUT FOR SOME REASON HE NEVER APPROACHED ME ONCE.
HRR! THAT'S DISCRIMI-NATION! I'VE GOTTA KNOW WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT!
ONE DAY, THE OLD MAN EVENTUALLY CAME CHARGING TOWARDS ME.
OH! IS HE COMING TO TALK TO ME?!
TAP TAP
BUT HE WENT TO THE GUY BESIDE ME.
YOU KNOW, I'M SO VERY HAPPY RIGHT NOW!
WELL, YOU KNOW, EVER SINCE I BECAME A CONVERT TO XXXX EVERYTHING'S GOING GREAT AND I'M SO HAPPY EVERY DAY. THAT'S IF YOU JOIN XXXX, SEE!
SO IT WAS RELIGION...
PREACHING TO THE HOMELESS GETS YOU NOWHERE.
WELL, YOU SEE MY WIFE'S A BELIEVER, SO I'M ALREADY A FOLLOWER.
OH! THEN YOU'RE A FRIEND INDEED!
HMMMPH


TOWN: 2


AT THIS TIME, I WAS SLEEPING UNDER A PEDES-TRIAN BRIDGE.
THERE WAS A FIRE STATION NEXT DOOR, SO I WAS SAFE EVEN IF THERE WAS A FIRE.


FOR MEALS I HAD OUT-OF-DATE BENTOS, RICE BALLS, AND SANDWICHES FROM CONVENIENCE STORES.

AFTER OPENING THE VINYL BAGS, I NEATLY CLOSED THEM AGAIN.
HRRK

SOME-TIMES, PEOPLE'D JUST RIP 'EM OPEN -- A MAJOR NUISANCE, SO DON'T DO IT!

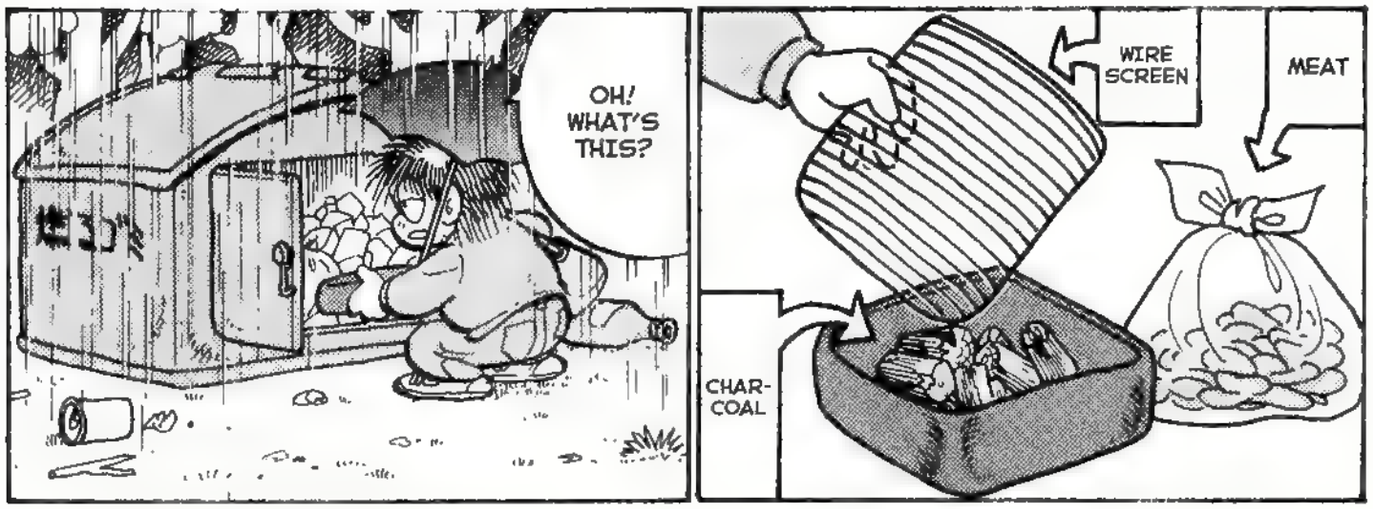
DAYS IT POURS ARE MISE-RABLE IF YOU'RE HOMELESS.
SHSSS~
WHA--?!

CAN'T EVEN GO OUT FOR BUTTS WITH THIS GOING ON!
SHSS
A VERY OFF BENTO
SHSS
SHSS SHSS
SCREW THIS! I'LL JUST DROWN MY SORROWS!
GAAHH~
HURK
FEEL SICK...
HRRR... SO COLD...
PAT PAT
PAT PAT
YOOHOO!
GOT ANY SMOKES?
GOT BUTTS...
AW, WHAT! JUST BUTTS?

SHFF SHFF
PHOOO
YOU'RE SMOKING BUTTS ANYWAY!
THIS CREEPY, OUTWARDLY EFFEMINATE LOOKING GUY SEEMED HOMELESS BUT HAD MANY ODD POINTS ABOUT HIM.
HE WAS ALWAYS EMPTY-HANDED, AND DIDN'T SEEM HARD UP FOR FOOD OR A PLACE TO STAY.
YO.
HEY!
AFTER THAT FIRST TIME, WE MET IN THE STREET A LOT AND IT GOT SO WE'D SAY HI AT LEAST.
ONE DAY, I WAS REALLY TIRED...
HAHHH~
THE FELLOW GREETED ME AS HE ALWAYS DID...
YO!
WHEN THIS WOMAN NEXT TO HIM GAVE ME A LOOK OF BLUNT DISGUST ...
G-GOD! YOU'RE DISGUSTING!
SO I IGNORED HIM AND JUST WALKED ON BY.
HUH? YOU IGNORING ME?!!
MEHHN... MEHHN
TWO OR THREE DAYS LATER ...

OH, 'SCUSE ME!
COULD YOU GIVE ME A LIGHT?
SURE.
THANKS A BUNCH!
HMPH. SO HE'S OVERLY CUTISH, EFFEMINATE, AND IGNORES BACK NOW...
ONE DAY, I DECIDED TO SOLVE THE MYSTERY OF THIS GUY AND FOLLOWED HIM.
SHWIFF
AAH!
H--HE'S GONE...
LIKE KAZE NO MATASABURO ...?!
A GAY VERSION?!
BLABLA BLAHBLAH...
BLABLA BLAHBLAH...
SINCE I ALMOST NEVER TALKED TO ANYONE ELSE, I CREATED ANOTHER ME AND WOULD TALK TO HIM.

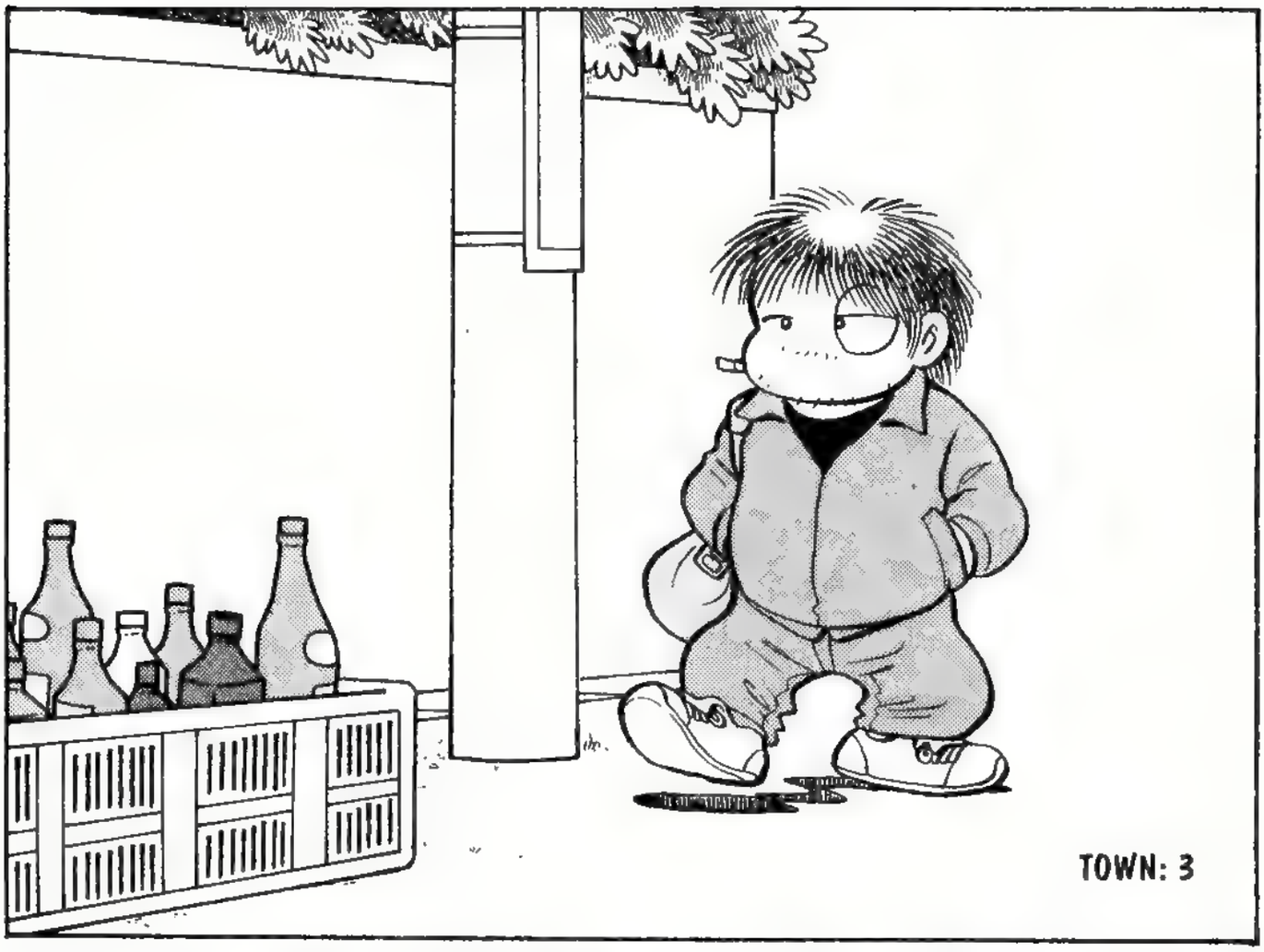
NOTICE: LIVING IN THE PARK IS ILLEGAL. PLEASE WITHDRAW BY THE DATE OF XXXX. PARK ADMINISTRATION OFFICE

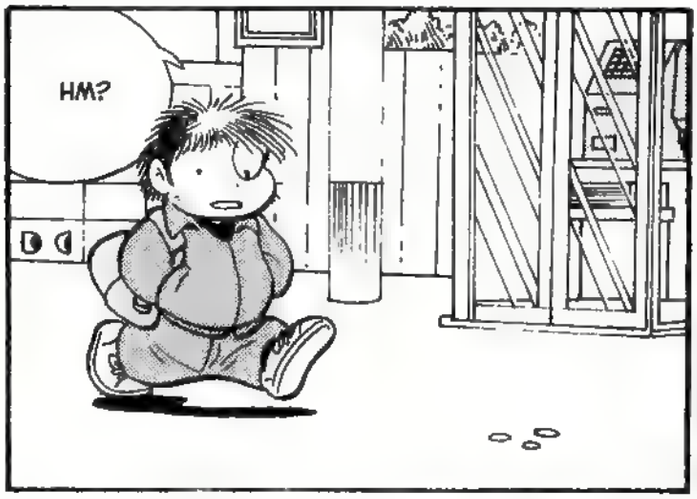


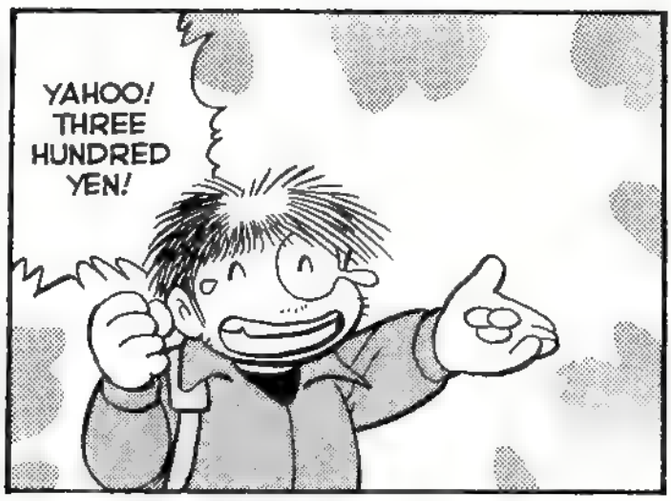
*BURNABLE GARBAGE

THEY SURE MAKE THINGS CONVENIENT THESE DAYS!
KSSS
AWW, THIS ISN'T ANY FUN AT ALL...
HEY! RAW EGGS!
HEY, YOU! WHAT ARE YOU DOING! DON'T BE MAKING A MESS!
SORRY. I WASN'T MAKING ANY MESS.
ARE YOU FROM PARK ADMINISTRATION ?
NO. I'M NOT.
THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN THIS PARK ALWAYS LEAVE A BIG MESS. IT'S A PAIN IN THE ASS.
WHERE DID YOU COME FROM!
OVER THERE.
DON'T BE A BUM. GET A JOB!
OOOKAY.
A BUM, HUH... HAS KIND OF A COOL RING TO IT.
I USUALLY GET CALLED A BEGGAR.
THEY EAT PIGEON...? WONDER IF IT'S TASTY?

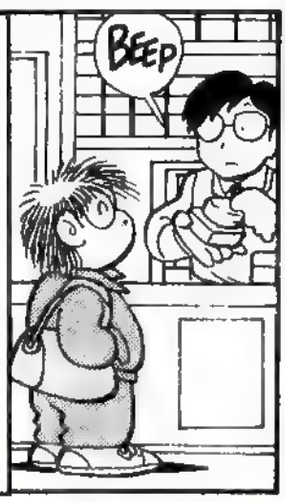
AHH... SO THIS IS WHERE EVERYONE LIVES...
STAAARE
B-- BETTER NOT MIX WITH 'EM!
I CAN'T EAT ALL THESE EGGS...
I'LL MAKE A NEST...
OH! WHAT ARE THESE?!
EGGS! EGGS!
THOSE ARE SNAKE EGGS -- I'M SURE OF IT!
JUST LEAVE 'EM! WALK AWAY!
THEY REALLY FELL FOR IT...





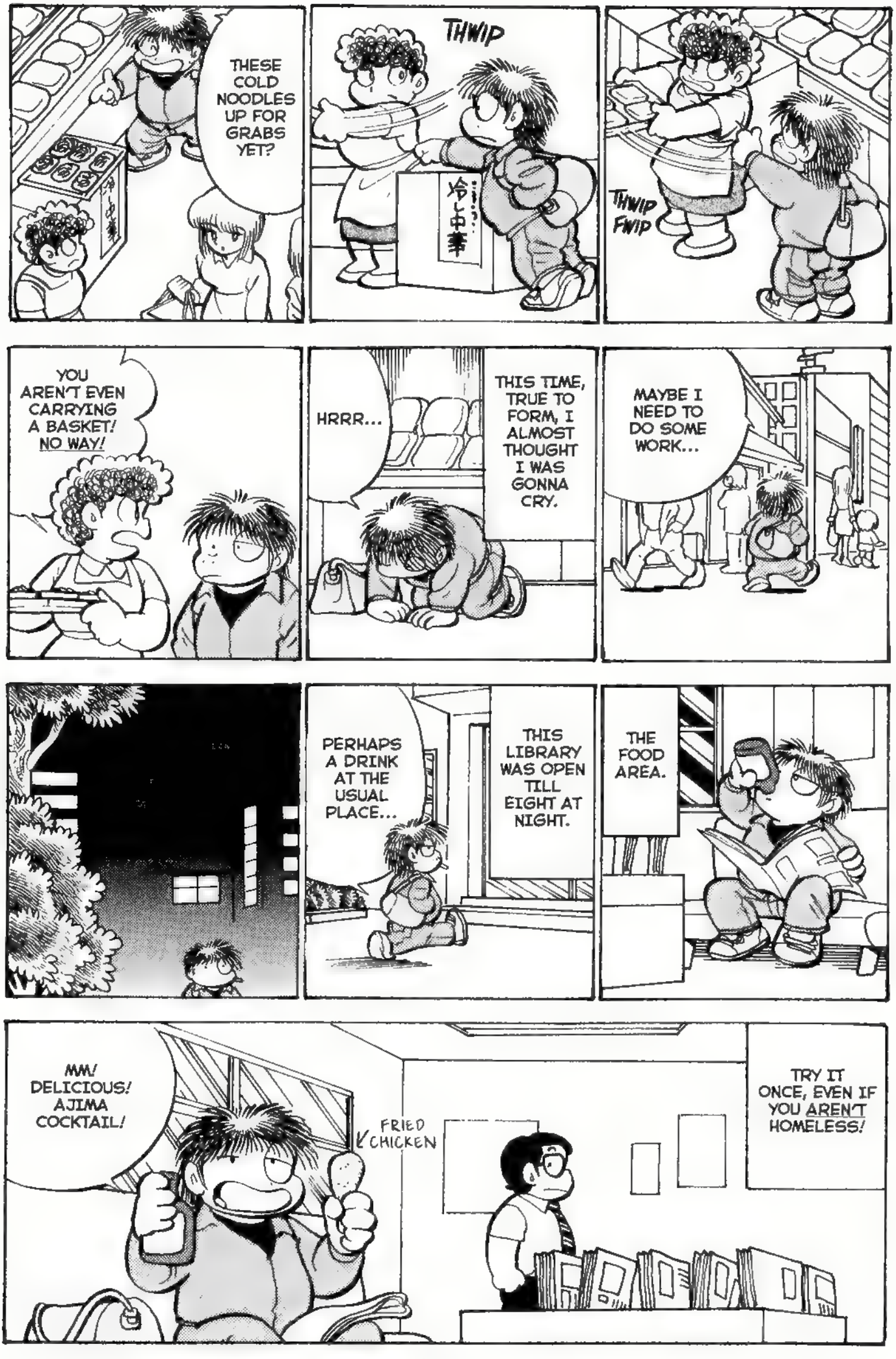


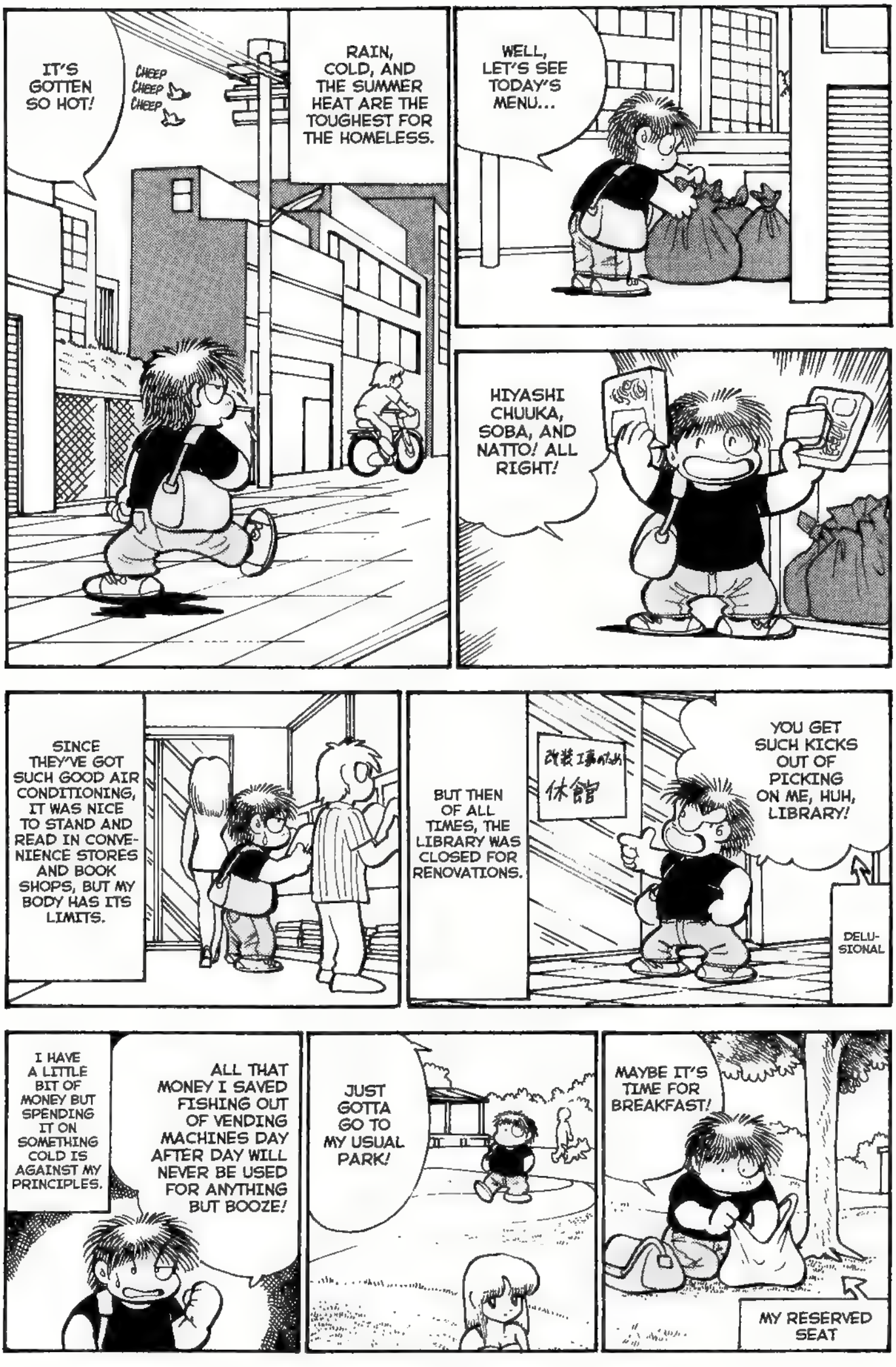
I BOUGHT A THREE-PACK OF HUNDRED-YEN-EACH UMAGOROSHI SAKE AT A CONVENIENCE STORE.



GWAH
GWAAHH
KCHIK
NO LUCK TODAY. I ONLY FOUND THIRTY YEN.
I MANAGED TO FIND SOME FOOD AND SMOKES...
BUT WHAT ABOUT BOOZE MONEY?
OOOH!
HEY! A BEGGAR! A BEGGAR!
LEAVE ME ALONE!
HE FOUND A BOOK! THE BEGGAR FOUND A BOOK!
OH. OCCULT STUFF.
BOOK
*AKIYAMA
THE BEGGAR THREW THE BOOK BACK!
WHUP
HUH?! LATELY I'VE REALLY COME TO BELIEVE THIS AUTHOR'S STUFF!
WHY DON'T YOU READ SOME SF!

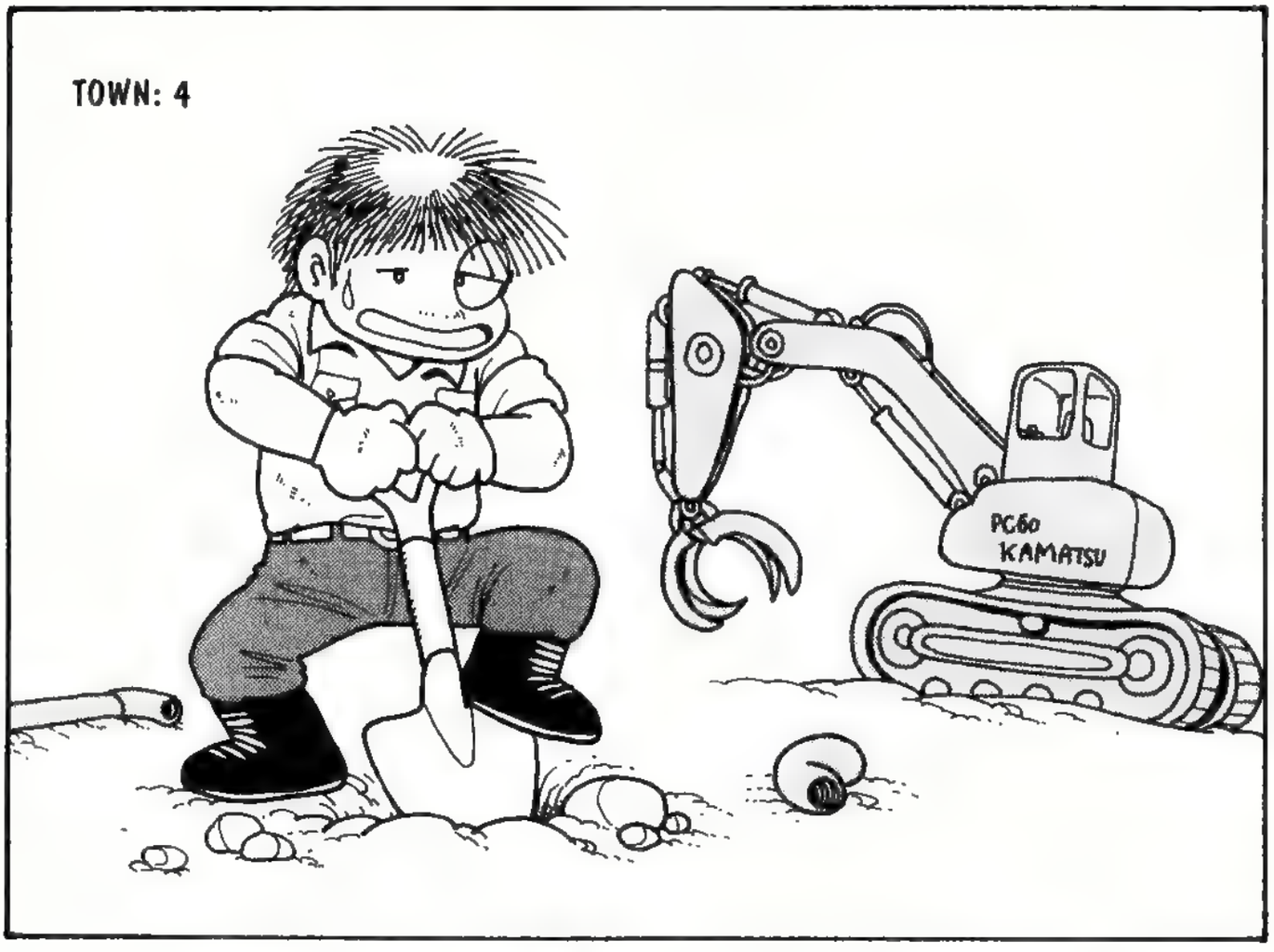
TODAY IS SEPARATED RECYCLING DAY.
AHA!
AN EMPTY, POCKET-SIZE BOTTLE OF WHISKEY.
I COLLECT THE ONE OR TWO DROPS THAT ARE IN THE BOTTOM OF THE OTHER LIQUOR BOTTLES.
WHEN YOU DO THIS, ALWAYS SMELL THE INSIDE OF THE BOTTLES!
BECAUSE SOMETIMES THERE CAN BE PISS OR OTHER DANGEROUS LIQUIDS INSIDE.
THIS IS A JOB THAT TAKES PERSE-VERANCE.
O-HO! GOOD WORK THERE, SOLDIER!
.....
YOU GO AROUND TO ALL THE PICK-UP LOCATIONS AND END UP WITH THE AJIMA COCKTAIL -- A MIX OF EVERY WHISKEY, SHOCHU, GIN, SAKE ETC.
BEER... THERE'S STILL SOME IN IT BUT...
EVEN IF YOU PUT BEER IN A CONTAINER WITH A SCREW TOP LID, IF YOU WALK AROUND WITH IT EVENTUA-LLY --
BOOSHHH
THAT'LL HAPPEN!
SO I DRINK IT ON THE SPOT.
MAYBE I'LL CHECK OUT THE TASTE-TESTING STANDS AT THE SUPERMARKET ...

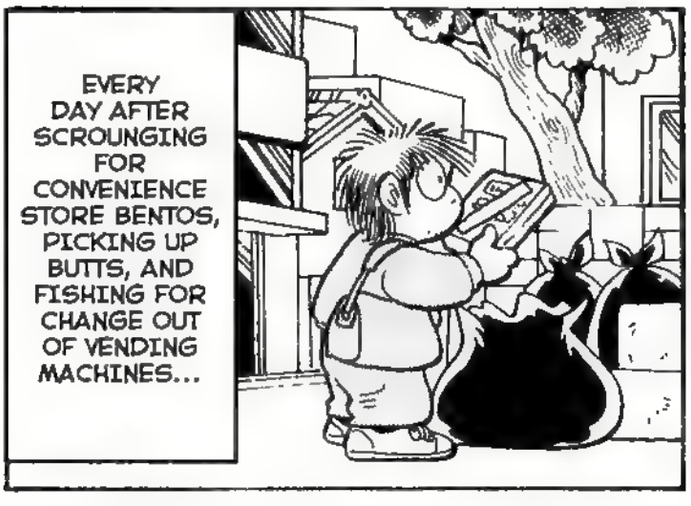

THESE COLD NOODLES UP FOR GRABS YET?
THWIP
冷し中華
THWIP FWIP
YOU AREN'T EVEN CARRYING A BASKET! NO WAY!
HRRR...
THIS TIME, TRUE TO FORM, I ALMOST THOUGHT I WAS GONNA CRY.
MAYBE I NEED TO DO SOME WORK...
PERHAPS A DRINK AT THE USUAL PLACE...
THIS LIBRARY WAS OPEN TILL EIGHT AT NIGHT.
THE FOOD AREA.
MM! DELICIOUS! AJIMA COCKTAIL!
FRIED CHICKEN
TRY IT ONCE, EVEN IF YOU AREN'T HOMELESS!

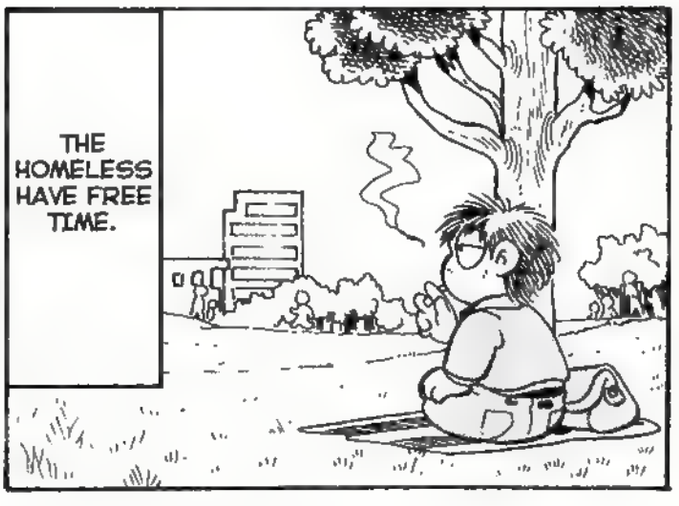

IT'S GOTTEN SO HOT!
CHEEP CHEEP CHEEP
RAIN, COLD, AND THE SUMMER HEAT ARE THE TOUGHEST FOR THE HOMELESS.
WELL, LET'S SEE TODAY'S MENU...
HIYASHI CHUUKA, SOBA, AND NATTO! ALL RIGHT!
SINCE THEY'VE GOT SUCH GOOD AIR CONDITIONING, IT WAS NICE TO STAND AND READ IN CONVENIENCE STORES AND BOOK SHOPS, BUT MY BODY HAS ITS LIMITS.
BUT THEN OF ALL TIMES, THE LIBRARY WAS CLOSED FOR RENOVATIONS.
改装工事のため
休館
YOU GET SUCH KICKS OUT OF PICKING ON ME, HUH, LIBRARY!
DELUSIONAL
I HAVE A LITTLE BIT OF MONEY BUT SPENDING IT ON SOMETHING COLD IS AGAINST MY PRINCIPLES.
ALL THAT MONEY I SAVED FISHING OUT OF VENDING MACHINES DAY AFTER DAY WILL NEVER BE USED FOR ANYTHING BUT BOOZE!
JUST GOTTA GO TO MY USUAL PARK!
MAYBE IT'S TIME FOR BREAKFAST!
MY RESERVED SEAT

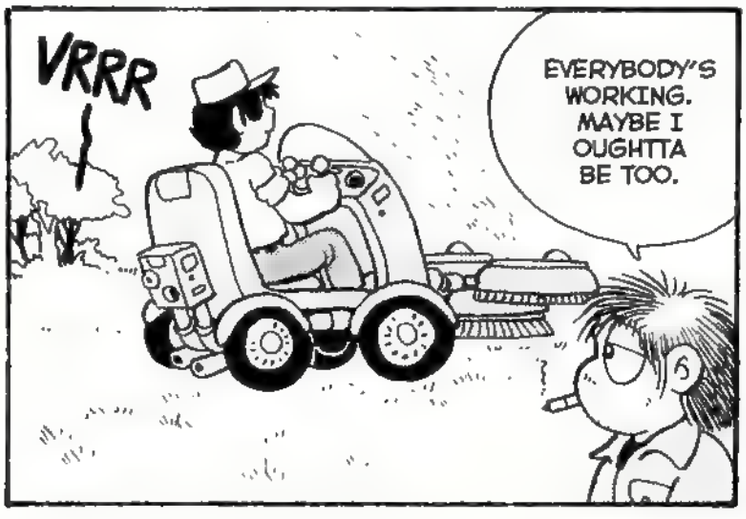
HIYASHI CHUUKA
DUHLISHUS!
NATTO SOBA
MM! DUHLISHUS!
HAHHH ...
MANGA MAGS I FOUND.
SAY, THIS NEW GUY'S PRETTY FUNNY!
YOUR OWN LIFE'S EVEN FUNNIER!
AHHH...
GOD, I SMELL...
MY HEAD'S ITCHY, MY FEET STINK, MY SHOES STINK...
I DO MY WASHING AS USUAL IN THE PARK BATHROOM.
SHAMPOO I ALSO FOUND
I'LL WASH MY SOCKS AND SHOES FOR NOW...
AND JUST WASH MY HEAD!
WHA--?!
SCRUB SCRUB
HUH? THIS WATER FOUNTAIN LOOKS PRETTY GOOD!

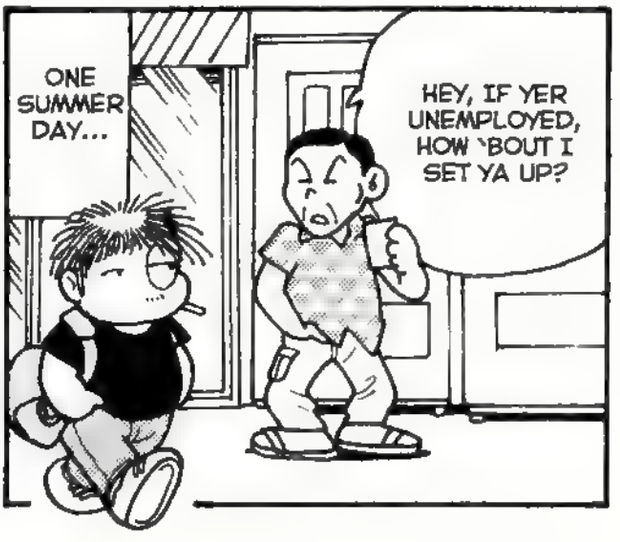
ALL RIGHT -- I'LL TAKE A SHOWER HERE TONIGHT WHEN NOBODY'S AROUND!
THAT NIGHT, SOME WELL-OFF HOMELESS HELD A BANQUET IN A NEARBY GAZEBO.
THERE ARE PLENTY OF LABORERS WHO WORK AFTERNOONS THEN SLEEP IN PARKS AT NIGHT.
WAHAHA
YOU! I'LL KILL YOU!
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!
REALLY ENJOYING THEMSELVES, HUH?
ALL RIGHT. NOW'S AS GOOD A TIME AS ANY.
FWOO CRAK- CA-CRAK CRAK
TEE HEE!
YAAYY!
FWOO
LIGHTING FIRE-CRACKERS ...?
KRAK
ON THIS OCCASSION I BECAME A BIT NIHILISTIC.


TOWN: 4
PC60
KAMATSU


EVERY DAY AFTER SCROUNGING FOR CONVENIENCE STORE BENTOS, PICKING UP BUTTS, AND FISHING FOR CHANGE OUT OF VENDING MACHINES...


THE HOMELESS HAVE FREE TIME.

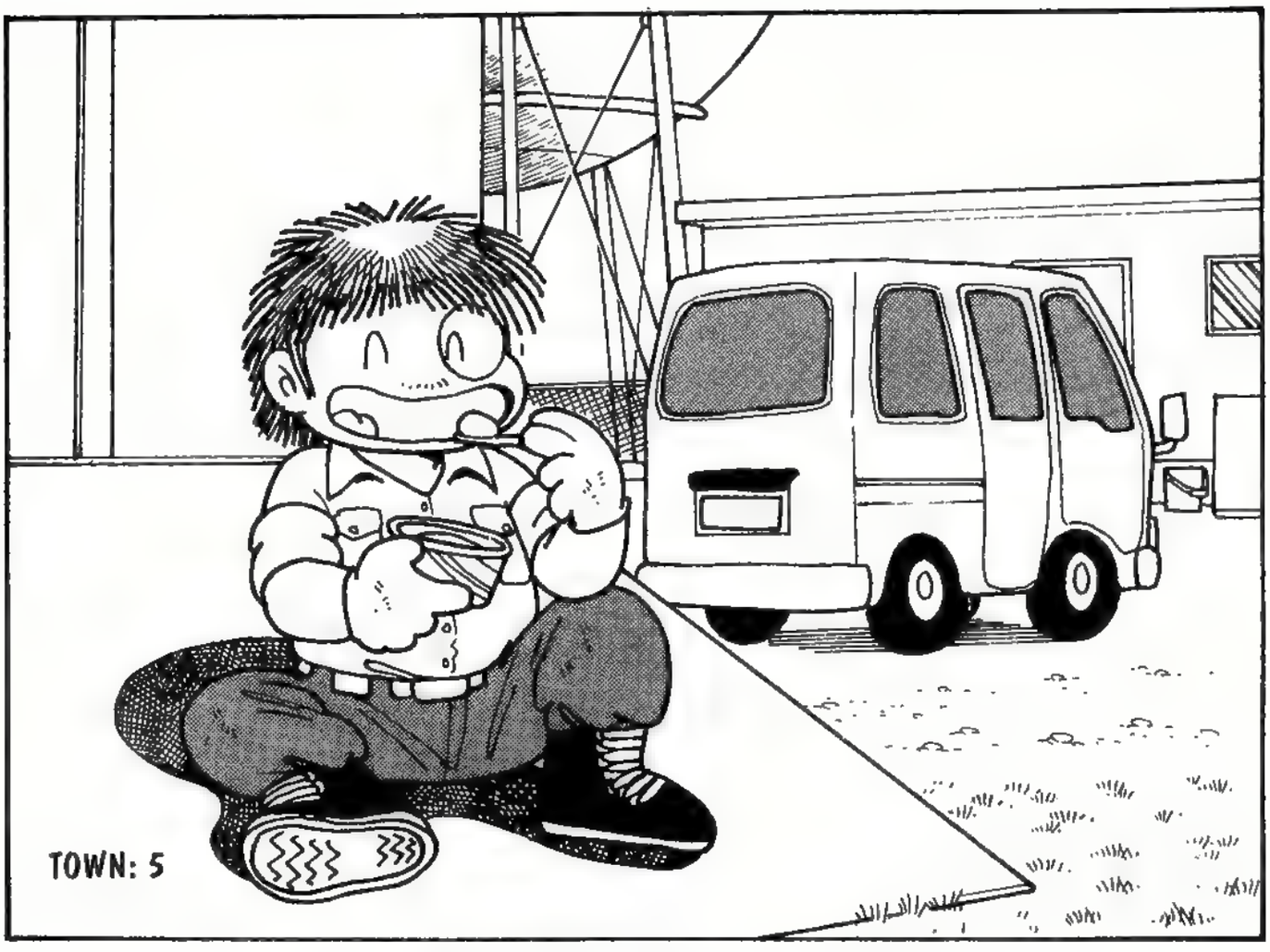

VRRR
EVERYBODY'S WORKING. MAYBE I OUGHTTA BE TOO.

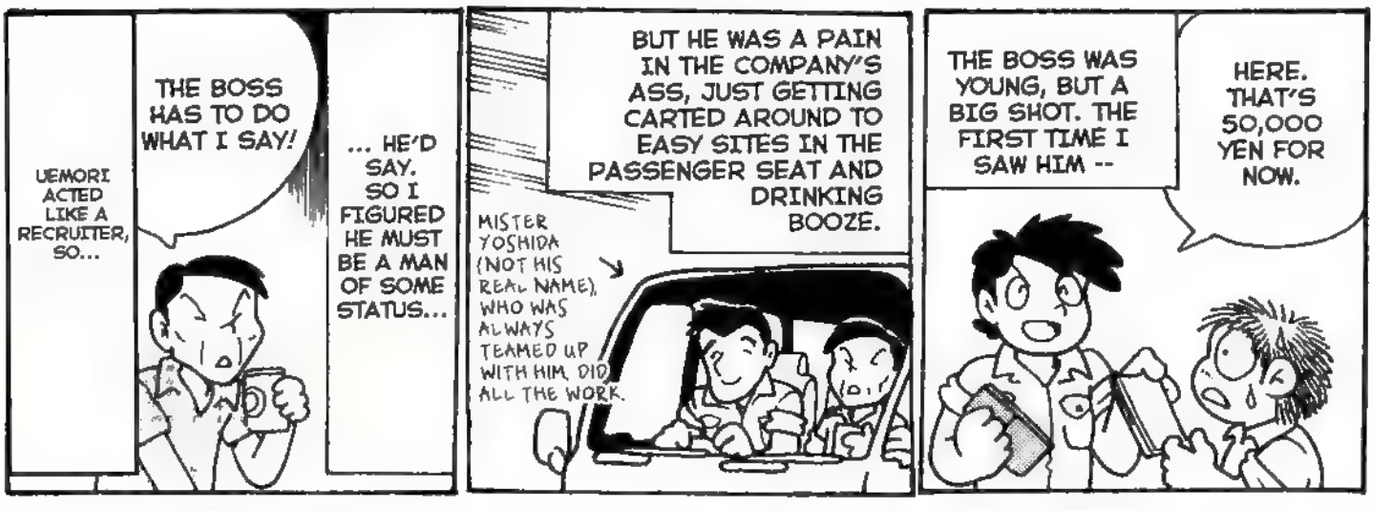

ONE SUMMER DAY...
HEY, IF YER UNEMPLOYED, HOW 'BOUT I SET YA UP?

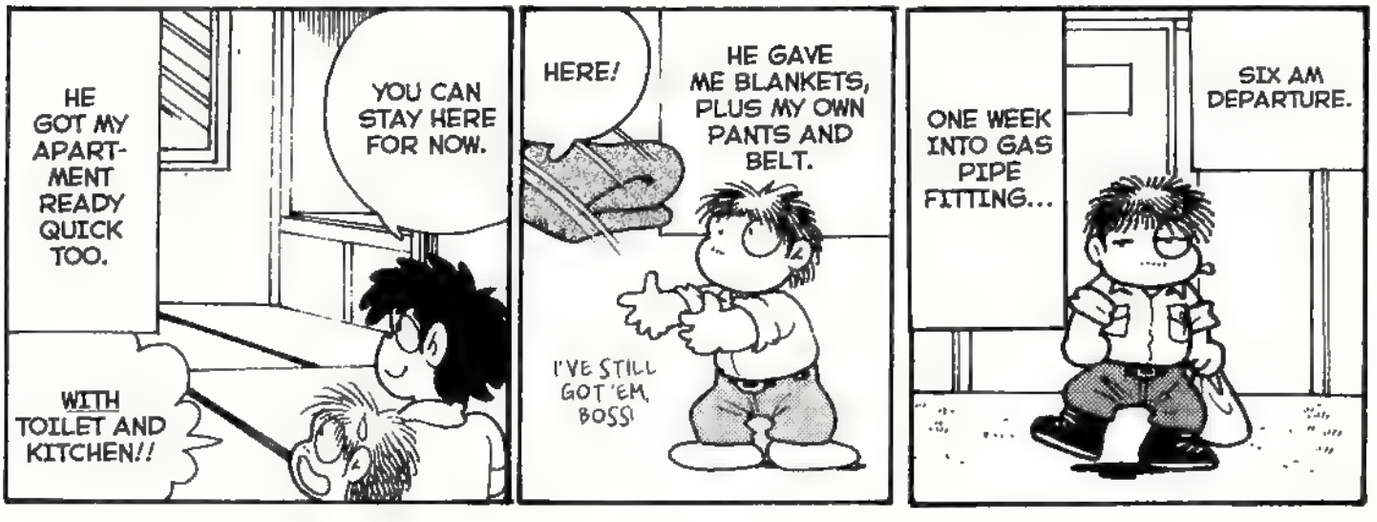
I WAS SCOUTED BY THE ALCOHOLIC MISTER UEMORI (NOT HIS REAL NAME) TO DO SOME GAS PIPE FITTING.
HAVE SOME UDON!
UEMORI WAS GOOD AT LOOKING AFTER YOU.
UNTIL I HAD A PLACE, HE LET ME STAY WITH HIM, AND EVEN TREATED ME TO MEALS.
I'LL MAKE YOUR RÉSUMÉ FOR YOU, SO GIVE ME 500 YEN.
CHUHAI FIRST THING IN THE MORNING
BUT HE WAS ALWAYS TRYING TO BUM SMALL CHANGE (EVEN THOUGH I WAS HOME-LESS).
HE NEVER MENTIONED THE RÉSUMÉ AGAIN...
WHILE I WAS IN THE BATH, HE'D GO THROUGH MY BAG AND SWIPE MY SMOKES.
H--HUH?!
HE'D COME STRAIGHT TO ME ON PAYDAY TO BORROW MONEY AND NOT PAY IT BACK.
JUST 10,000 YEN! 10,000 YEN THIS TIME!
HE GAVE ME A BICYCLE, BUT WHEN I WAS RIDING IT THE COPS BUSTED ME 'CAUSE IT WAS STOLEN AND THAT GOT ME INTO ALL KINDS OF TROUBLE...
SHIT! GODDAMN THAT OLD BASTARD!
WELL, TIME TO WORK! NO SLACKING HERE!
THE SO-CALLED WHEEL-BARROW
DUMP TRUCK
YOU RUN IT UP HERE
HURRY UP, OLD MAN...!
.....

WE DO A TWO-MAN --
SHUK
SU-PLEX!
FULL OF CEMENT
PLIP
CAN'T MOVE
I'VE BEEN IN THE SCORCHING HEAT FOR THREE DAYS...
WHEN I SUDDENLY PASS OUT STILL STANDING WITH SHOVEL IN MY HAND.
TAKE A BREAK, OLD MAN!
40KG BAG OF CEMENT
HRRGG GGHH!
*JOINT CEMENT
PWAFF
THE BOSS
MISTER AZUMA, I'M PUTTING YOU ON REMOVAL WORK STARTING TOMORROW.

IN SOME WAYS, REMOVAL WORK IS EASIER GOING BECAUSE I COULD SIT IN THE PASSENGER SEAT AND REST AS WE DROVE FROM SITE TO SITE.
TH--THAT'S QUITE AMAZING, MISTER YANAI (NOT HIS REAL NAME)!
BANGED A MARRIED WOMAN I HOOKED UP WITH THROUGH PHONE DATING YESTERDAY! HEH HEH HEH!
TEETER TEETER
GIMME THAT! GIMME!
CHKK
CHKK
NOW THERE'S A PRO...
UHHH~
DON'T JUST STAND THERE! IF YOU CAN'T THINK OF WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE NEXT AND GET TO IT, WE'LL NEVER BE FINISHED!
UHH... UMM!
GAHRR!
CHNNK CHNNK
HYSTERICAL HAMSTER-ITIS
BUT THE GREAT THING ABOUT PHYSICAL WORK IS YOU SLEEP REAL WELL AFTERWARDS.
NGGNN~
AZUMA, LEND ME SOME MON-- OH. HE'S ALREADY ASLEEP!


TOWN: 5


UEMORI ACTED LIKE A RECRUITER, SO...
THE BOSS HAS TO DO WHAT I SAY!
... HE'D SAY. SO I FIGURED HE MUST BE A MAN OF SOME STATUS...
BUT HE WAS A PAIN IN THE COMPANY'S ASS, JUST GETTING CARTED AROUND TO EASY SITES IN THE PASSENGER SEAT AND DRINKING BOOZE.
MISTER YOSHIDA (NOT HIS REAL NAME), WHO WAS ALWAYS TEAMED UP WITH HIM, DID ALL THE WORK.
THE BOSS WAS YOUNG, BUT A BIG SHOT. THE FIRST TIME I SAW HIM --
HERE. THAT'S 50,000 YEN FOR NOW.

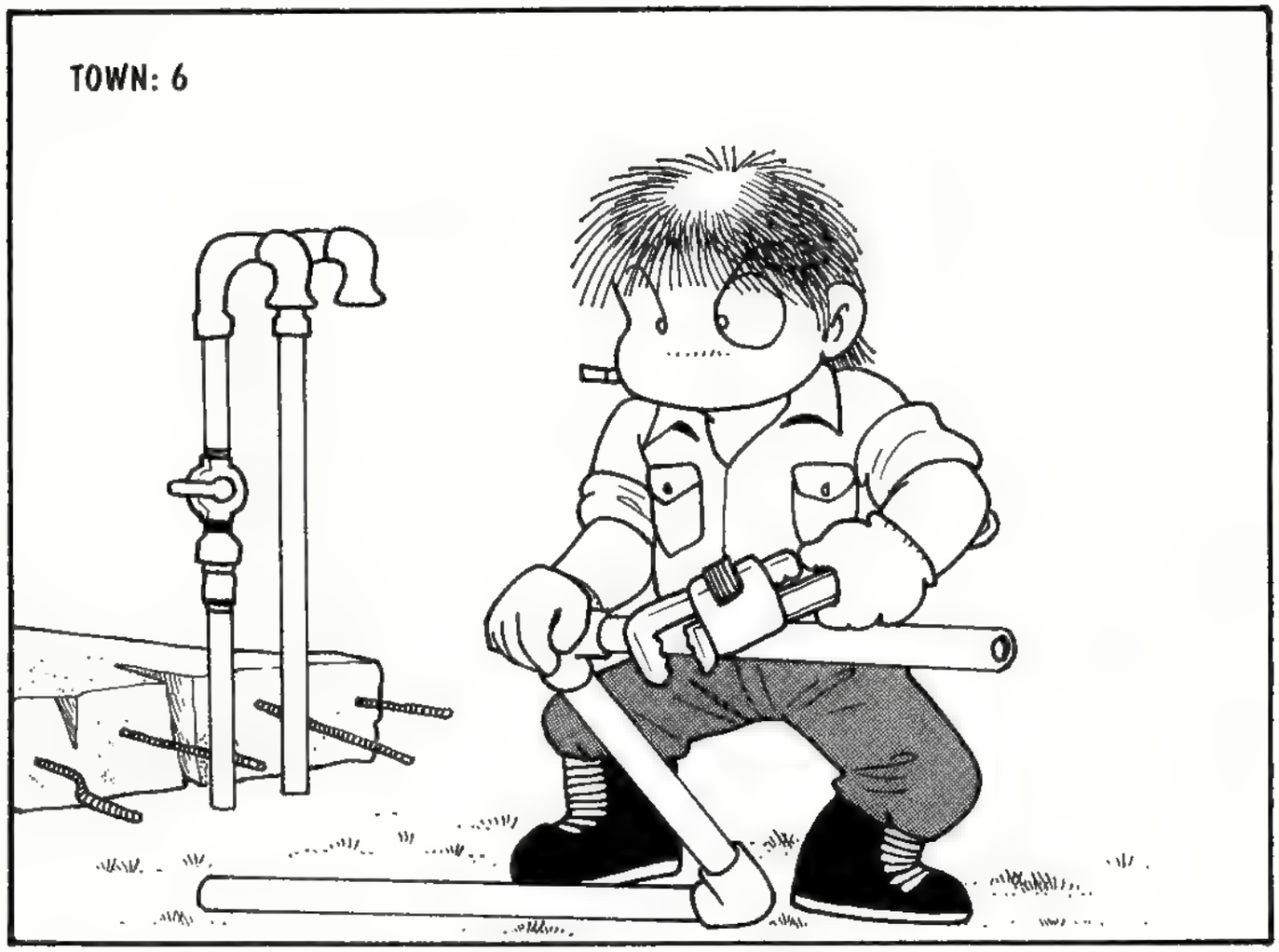

HE GOT MY APART-MENT READY QUICK TOO.
YOU CAN STAY HERE FOR NOW.
WITH TOILET AND KITCHEN!!
HERE!
HE GAVE ME BLANKETS, PLUS MY OWN PANTS AND BELT.
I'VE STILL GOT 'EM, BOSS!
ONE WEEK INTO GAS PIPE FITTING...
SIX AM DEPARTURE.

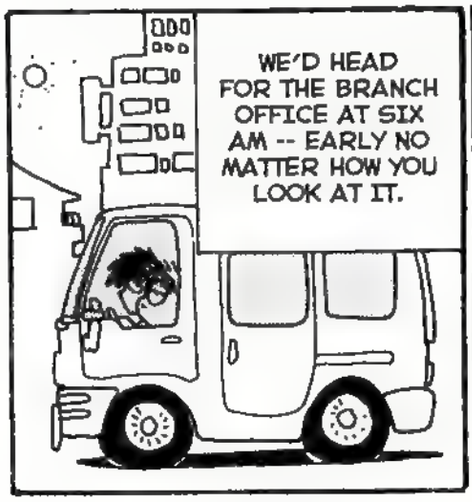
VRROOOMM
.....
BANGED ANOTHER WOMAN I PULLED THROUGH PHONE DATING YESTERDAY!
WE GOT TO THE BRANCH OFFICE AND GOT THE SCHEDULE OF REMOVAL JOBS FOR THAT DAY.
AT THE SITE, WE USE A DEVICE CALLED A LOCATOR TO SEARCH FOR BURIED PIPES.
BEEP
IT'S KIND OF LIKE DIVINING.
WE DIG A HOLE TO A CERTAIN DEPTH...
THEN POKE DOWN A BAR TO SEE WHERE THE PIPE IS.
KONG KONG
THAT'S SEWAGE.
KANG KANG
THAT'S WATER.
TING TING
APPARENTLY, PROS CAN TELL THE PIPES BY FEEL.
GO FOR IT!
GHHK GHHK
IF YOU END UP SMASHING A WATER PIPE, WE'VE GOTTA CALL THE WATER PEOPLE AND ASK 'EM TO REPAIR IT -- IT'S 10,000 YEN OUT OF YOUR OWN POCKET!
ONCE WE FIND THE PIPE, WE HAVE TO CUT IT OFF WITH AN OIL PRESSURE DEVICE, CAP IT, WRAP TAPE AROUND IT, AND THAT'S IT.
KLANK
TO BE MORE SPECIFIC ...

FIRST WE REMOVE THE METER WITH WATER PLIERS, AND THEN TAKE OFF THE STANDING PIPES WITH A PIPE WRENCH, STOP IT WITH A PLUG WITH AN ATTACHED SEAL, REMOVE THE CHEESE, DO THIS THING WITH THE STOPPER, BUT THIS INFORMATION DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHING TO ANYONE, SO I'LL CUT IT SHORT THERE.
JUST DIGGING A HOLE WAS HARD ENOUGH FOR ME, WITH MY BODY HAVING GONE TO HELL FROM HOME-LESSNESS.
BUT AFTER HALF A YEAR I WAS PUMPED.
THE HARD THINGS WERE DIGGING HOLES THAT WERE FILLED WITH BIG ROCKS...
CHKK CHKK
TREE ROOTS ...
GOTTA CUT 'EM WITH A SAW!
AND TIMES WHEN YOU NEVER FOUND THE PIPE.
JUST BURY ME IN HERE TOO!
MY SCARIEST MEMORIES WERE OF ONE DAY WHEN WE WERE WORKING ALONGSIDE SOME WRECKERS.
PEGO KOMOTSU
AAH!
VRRWW

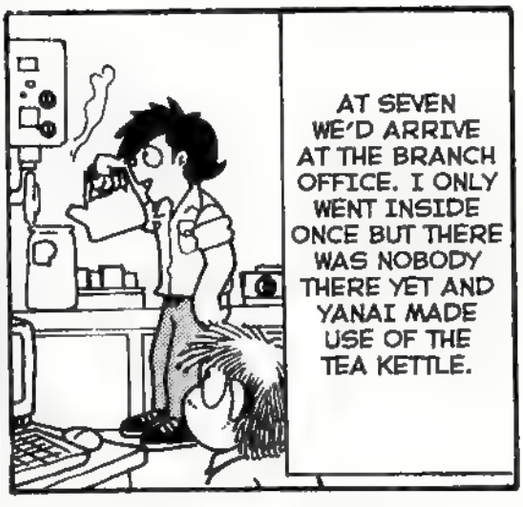
VNN VNN VNN
KCHANNG
WHUD
VNN VNN VNN
HAHH! HAHH! HAHH!
CHOKK
IF I'D BEEN STANDING THERE, I WOULDA LOST MY HEAD!
URRR
WE'RE OFF TO THE NEXT SITE!
GUHH! YOU'RE SO CALM!!
KSHHHH
UHH, THIS THING'S BLOWING GAS...
AND THOSE SPARKS ARE COMING DOWN...
FSSS~
KSHHHH

TOWN: 6

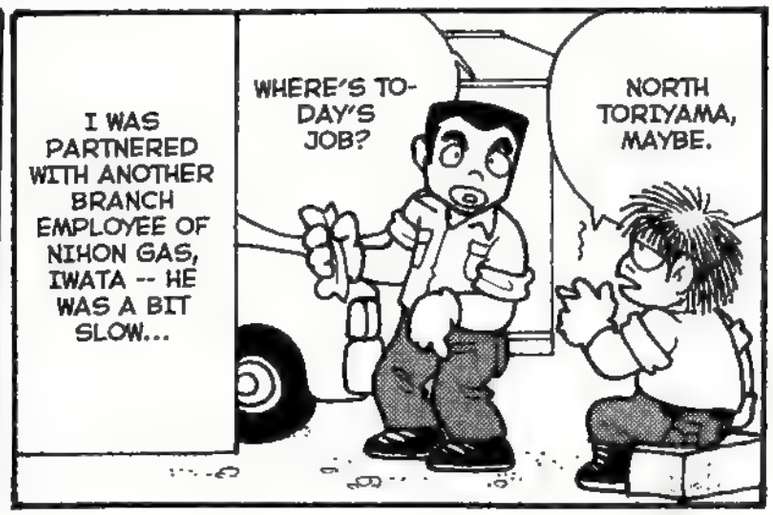



WE'D HEAD FOR THE BRANCH OFFICE AT SIX AM -- EARLY NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK AT IT.

GOTTA LEAVE EARLY OR THE RAILROAD CROSSINGS'D MAKE US LATE! THE OLD BROAD I DID YESTERDAY SAID HER HUSBAND WOULDN'T LAY HER! HEH HEH HEH!


AT SEVEN WE'D ARRIVE AT THE BRANCH OFFICE. I ONLY WENT INSIDE ONCE BUT THERE WAS NOBODY THERE YET AND YANAI MADE USE OF THE TEA KETTLE.

ALL THE FULL AND SUBCON-TRACTED EMPLOYEES ASSEMBLED FOR THE MORNING ADDRESS.
SAFETY FIRST AND LET'S DO OUR BEST AGAIN TODAY!
WE'LL DO OUR BEST!


I WAS PARTNERED WITH ANOTHER BRANCH EMPLOYEE OF NIHON GAS, IWATA -- HE WAS A BIT SLOW...
WHERE'S TO-DAY'S JOB?
NORTH TORIYAMA, MAYBE.

WHAT BLOCK NUMBER?
DUNNO.
AND THEN WHERE?
KYODO, MAYBE.
WHAT BLOCK NUMBER?
I SAID I DON'T KNOW!
IWATA WAS ATTACHED TO MISTER SAITO, WHO LOST IT IN NO TIME.
IWATAAA !!
GODDAMN YOU! DAMN YOU! DAMN YOU!
WHAK WHAK WHAK
THESE WERE THE LOVELY PEOPLE I WAS WORKING WITH TODAY.
IWATA SURE GOT BEAT REAL GOOD, DIDN'T HE! HEH HEH HEH!
CHKK CHKK CHKK
IWATA'S HOLE DIGGING WAS HILARIOUS, BUT I COULDN'T LAUGH.
SLOW DOWN, MAN...
CHKK CHKK
STICK IT WITH A ONE-INCH PLUG RIGHT NOW!
OKAY !
NO! NO! NO!
CHOK
YOU IDIOT!!
KRAK
DRIIIIP
THIS BLOOD-LETTING INCIDENT BECAME AN ISSUE EVEN AT HEAD OFFICE APPARENTLY, BUT SINCE SAITO WAS A VETERAN AND CLOSE WITH THE BOSS, IT GOT OVERLOOKED.
I'M TOTALLY OKAY.

AND YET, SAITO'S PERSONALITY WOULD CHANGE IN FRONT OF CUSTOMERS.
YES, OUR NEW PRODUCT IS VERY CONVENIENT, SIR!
AFTER-NOON BREAK.
SAY, THIS CLUB LOOKS PRETTY GOOD! WE SHOULD GO TOGETHER, IWATA! HEH HEH HEH!
A CABARET CLUB?
WHEN I GOT BACK TO THE DORM, UEMORI'S YOUNGER BROTHER WAS WAITING.
MY BROTHER'S AN ALCOHOLIC CROOK!
Yo!
AZUMA, QUIT HANGING OUT WITH THAT YANAI AND IWATA.
YANAI HAD RECOMMENDED AN ADULT CLUB TO IWATA ONCE BEFORE WITHOUT HIM KNOWING ANY BETTER.
YOU SHOULD CHECK THIS PLACE OUT, MAN!
AND IWATA TOTALLY FELL FOR IT.
HE STARTED GOING SO FREQUENTLY HE HAD TO BORROW MONEY AND IT TURNED INTO A PROBLEM.
AHA HA HAHA!
AND AT OTHER TIMES...
HAHH HAHH
SWISH
HUH?! WHAT HAPPENED TO THE OIL PRESSURE DEVICE SCREWS THAT WERE HERE?!
I DUNNO! HEH HEH HEH!
YANAI LOVED PRANKING PEOPLE LIKE THIS.
HEH HEH HEH!
HUH?! HUH?!

BUT THE YOUNGER UEMORI WHO TOLD ME TO WATCH OUT WAS NO ANGEL HIMSELF.
OUTTTA THE WAY, BROAD!
WEARS A NIHON GAS UNIFORM BUT IT DOESN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE
AZUMA, BUY YOURSELF A HEATED TABLE AND ELECTRIC KETTLE. I'LL INTORDUCE YOU TO A CHEAP PLACE!
BUY 'EM, I SAID!!
I'LL BUY.
HE FORCIBLY DRAGGED ME TO AN APPLIANCE DEALER AND HOOKED ME UP WITH A LOAN.
GETTING A COMMI-SSION
GET SOME INSU-RANCE TOO!
DONCHA WANT ANY?!
I'LL GET. I'LL GET.
NOKK NOKK NOKK
MISTER AZUMA, COULD I TALK TO YOU FOR A MOMENT ABOUT THE LORD?
THE LORD, HUH. SURE THING!
NOW BUY A SEWING MACHINE, MAN! A SEWING MACHINE!
A SEWING MACHINE ...?!
MORNING!
MORNING! WHERE'S TO-DAY'S JOB?
KITAMI, MAYBE...
WHAT BLOCK NUMBER?

YAA!
HEHHN
WORK WAS HARD TODAY!
ANYWAY, TIME FOR A DRINK.
REFRI-GERATOR FROM THE BOSS
DELI-CIOUS!
ZOKZOK
H'LLO ?
LIKE A NEWSPAPER SUB-SCRIPTION ?
I'M HERE FROM HOKKAIDO TO WORK. I SEND MY ENTIRE SALARY BACK HOME SO I DON'T HAVE ANY MONEY!
RIGHT NOW I'M DRINKING A PINT OF 750 YEN SYNTHETIC ALCOHOL! BUH HUH HUHH!
FORGET IT! YOU DON'T NEED IT!
NOW, LAUNDRY AND A BATH!
ULP!
PTOO
LUNATIC!
LUNATIC! LUNATIC!

LUNATIC!!
.....
PHOOO ...
HEHHEH HEHHEHEH!
AAH!!
YANAI, YOU COME TO THIS BATH HOUSE TOO...?
YUP! HEH HEH HEH!
I WORK WITH THIS GUY EVERY DAY AND NOW I EVEN HAVE TO PUT UP WITH HIM AT THE BATH HOUSE...?
THE NEXT DAY IT RAINED ALL DAY.
WITH BLUE COLLAR JOBS, YOU USUALLY EXPECT TO NOT WORK ON RAINY DAYS...
BUT YANAI WENT TO WORK IN FULL SPIRITS.
PUT ON THAT RAINCOAT.
HEHHN HEHHN
RAIN DOESN'T BOTHER ME, SEE?
GIVE IT TEN MINUTES AND OUR CLOTHES'LL DRY OUT! HEH HEH HEH!
SPTT SPTT
SHRAKK
H--HE'S A MONSTER!
GUHS GUHS

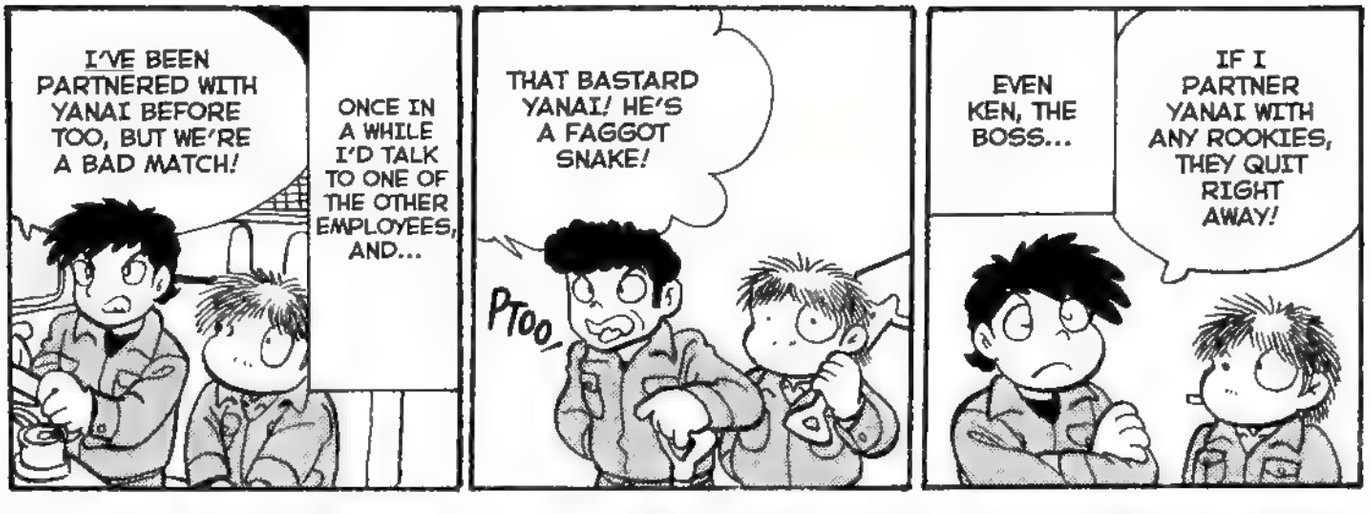
UMM...
THE GAS IN MY HOUSE HAS CUT OFF.
WHA--?!
A SHARED PIPE...
"SHARED PIPES" ARE COMMONLY USED IN COMPLEX HOUSING SITUATIONS...
IF YOU CUT HERE...
BOTH GET CUT OFF
THE INTENDED HOUSE
IT'S THE BIGGEST, MOST UNFORGIVABLE MISTAKE IN REMOVAL JOBS. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO CONTACT THE BRANCH OFFICE RIGHT AWAY AND CALL FOR AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE VEHICLE.
WEEOO
FIXING IT HIMSELF IN ANGER
BEING THE COLD-BLOODED ANIMAL THAT HE WAS, YANAI 'S FACE BROKE OUT IN A COLD SWEAT...
BUT I WASN'T THE ONE RESPONSIBLE, SO I DIDN'T CARE.
PEH! YOU GUYS'RE SUPPOSED TO BE PROS?!
DEMO-LITION GUY
FSSSS
ARE YOU GETTING GAS NOW?
YES, I AM!
WHAT A HOT MAMA SHE WAS! COMIN' OUTTA THE BATH LIKE THAT! HEH HEH HEH HEH!

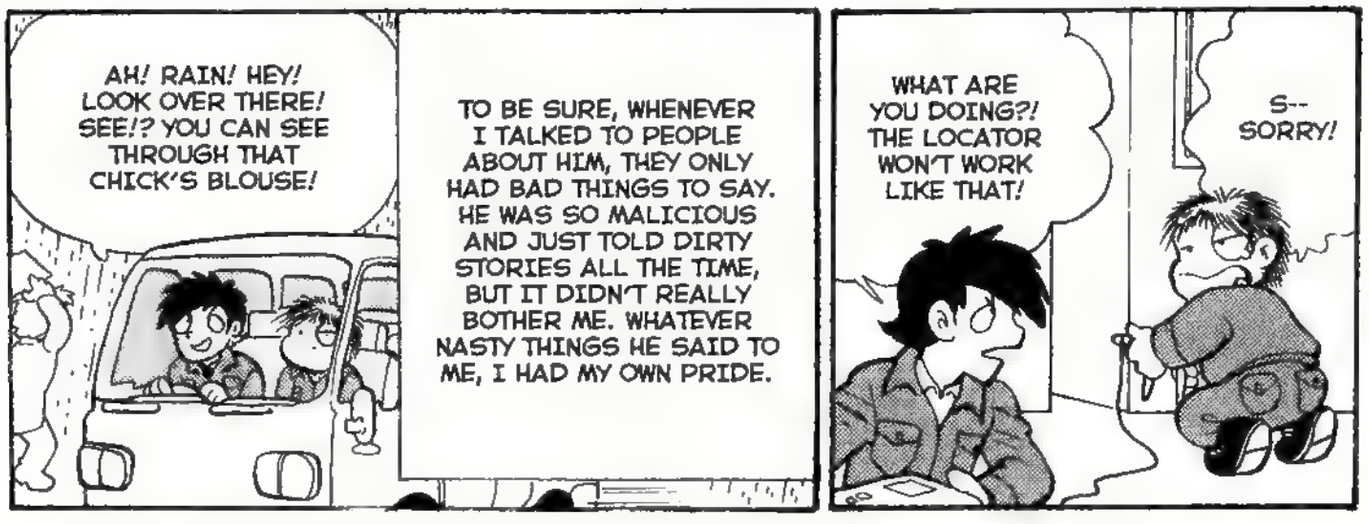
WHEN I GOT BACK TO MY PLACE I HAD FRIED CHICKEN, DEEP FRIED TOFU, AND SAKE...
AND TO FINISH OFF, MISO RAMEN I BOUGHT FROM A RAMEN SHOP. THEN I SLEPT.
STILL HUNG OVER... UHH...
RICE BALL IN THE MORNING
OH, YANAI! WHAT'S THE RUSH...
TODAY WE'RE DOING TEN REMOVALS!
WHA--?!
CHKK
CHKK
KANG
KANG
YEE E!
WE WORKED TILL EVENING WITHOUT A LUNCH BREAK.
BUT OTHER DAYS...
TODAY... NADA...
THE THING IS, BECAUSE WE WORKED FOR A SUB-SUBCONTRACTED COMPANY OF NIHON GAS, IF WE DIDN'T MEET OUR QUOTAS OF JOB UNITS WE DIDN'T GET MUCH PAY. WHEN THAT HAPPENED, WE DID RE-CUTTINGS.
RE-CUTTING
WE CUT THE PIPE LONG AND MAKE A DIAGRAM. (THAT'S ONE WORK UNIT.)
LATER WE CUT IT AGAIN TO MAKE IT SHORTER -- A "SECOND" JOB.
THERE'VE BEEN A LOT OF RE-CUTTINGS LATELY, HUH?
SUPERIOR AT HEAD OFFICE.
HEY! IT'S YAMAZAKI! BUSTED!
PRELIM INSPECTION OF TODAY'S SITE...

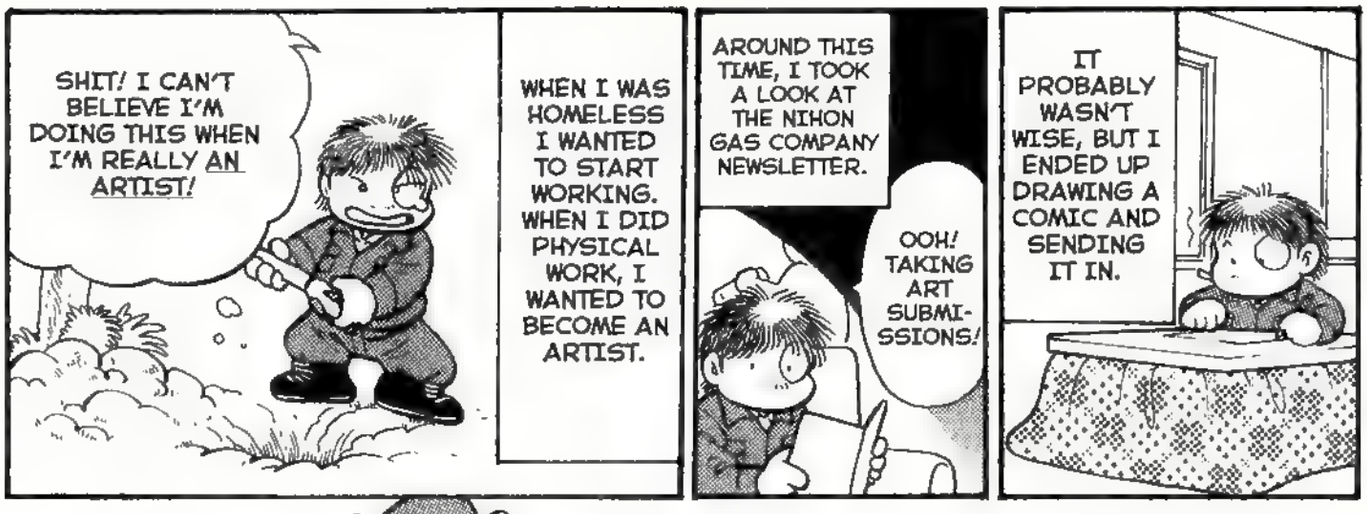
OH, YANAI!
WHAT'RE YOU UP TO, MAN? HEH HEH HEH!
MISTER YAMAZAKI, WHO WORKED IN HEAD OFFICE'S SALES, WAS ALWAYS PULLED OVER TO THE SIDE OF THE ROAD ASLEEP.
WAIT HERE A SEC!
IF HE DOZED OFF AT THE OFFICE, MISTER SAITO'D GET PISSED OFF, SO HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO HEAD OUT.
YAMAZAKI! GO SELL ONE GANTAKUN AT LEAST!
WANT SOME COFFEE?
A BRIBE TO KEEP US QUIET.
APPARENTLY KEN'S SITE'S BUSY SO WE'RE GOING OVER!
WHEN WORK ENDED QUICKLY...
KEN (THE NAME WE CALLED OUR BOSS) WAS THE ONE PERSON THAT YANAI -- WHO HATED EVERYONE OTHER THAN HIMSELF -- RESPECTED AND LIKED.
SO HE WAS A GOOD BOY WHENEVER KEN WAS WATCHING HIM.
WHENEVER HE GOT CALLED TO WORK WITH KEN HE'D DRIVE OVER EAGERLY
WHAM
ON THE DATE OF XXXX, DUE TO SPEEDING AND CARELESS DRIVING, AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT WAS KNOCKED OVER WHEN HE JUMPED INTO THE STREET.
YOU ALL RIGHT! I'M REALLY SORRY!

HEH HEH HEH! I AM AN AWESOME DRIVER!
BUT HITTING PEOPLE'S BAD, MAN!
ON PAYDAY EVERYONE MET AT THE BOSS'S HOUSE (IT DOUBLED AS AN OFFICE).
HERE YOU GO, MISTER AZUMA!
TH--THANKS!
TH--THIS MUCH!!
I'D GOTTEN ADVANCES SO MOST OF MY PAY WAS GONE, BUT SINCE I'D SPENT SO LONG HOMELESS I'D QUIVER AT THE SIGHT OF ANYTHING OVER TEN THOUSAND YEN.
WHAT SHOULD I DO? WHAT SHOULD I DO?!
PACE PACE
HMM!
焼とり
†HIDEO HIGASHI: MY BLUE COLLAR NAME
*YAKITORI
M--MAYBE I'LL JUST TRY THIS IZAKAYA...
WELCOME!
A--AND THE SAKE AND YAKITORI SET?
AHH! I REALLY INDULGED MYSELF BIG TIME!
WH--WHAT SHOULD I DO WITH WHAT'S LEFT? I WON'T FEEL SAFE JUST WALKING AROUND WITH IT...
FWUP
IN THE END, I HID IT UNDER THE TATAMI MAT.

TOWN: 7


I'VE BEEN PARTNERED WITH YANAI BEFORE TOO, BUT WE'RE A BAD MATCH!
ONCE IN A WHILE I'D TALK TO ONE OF THE OTHER EMPLOYEES, AND...
THAT BASTARD YANAI! HE'S A FAGGOT SNAKE!
PTOO
EVEN KEN, THE BOSS...
IF I PARTNER YANAI WITH ANY ROOKIES, THEY QUIT RIGHT AWAY!

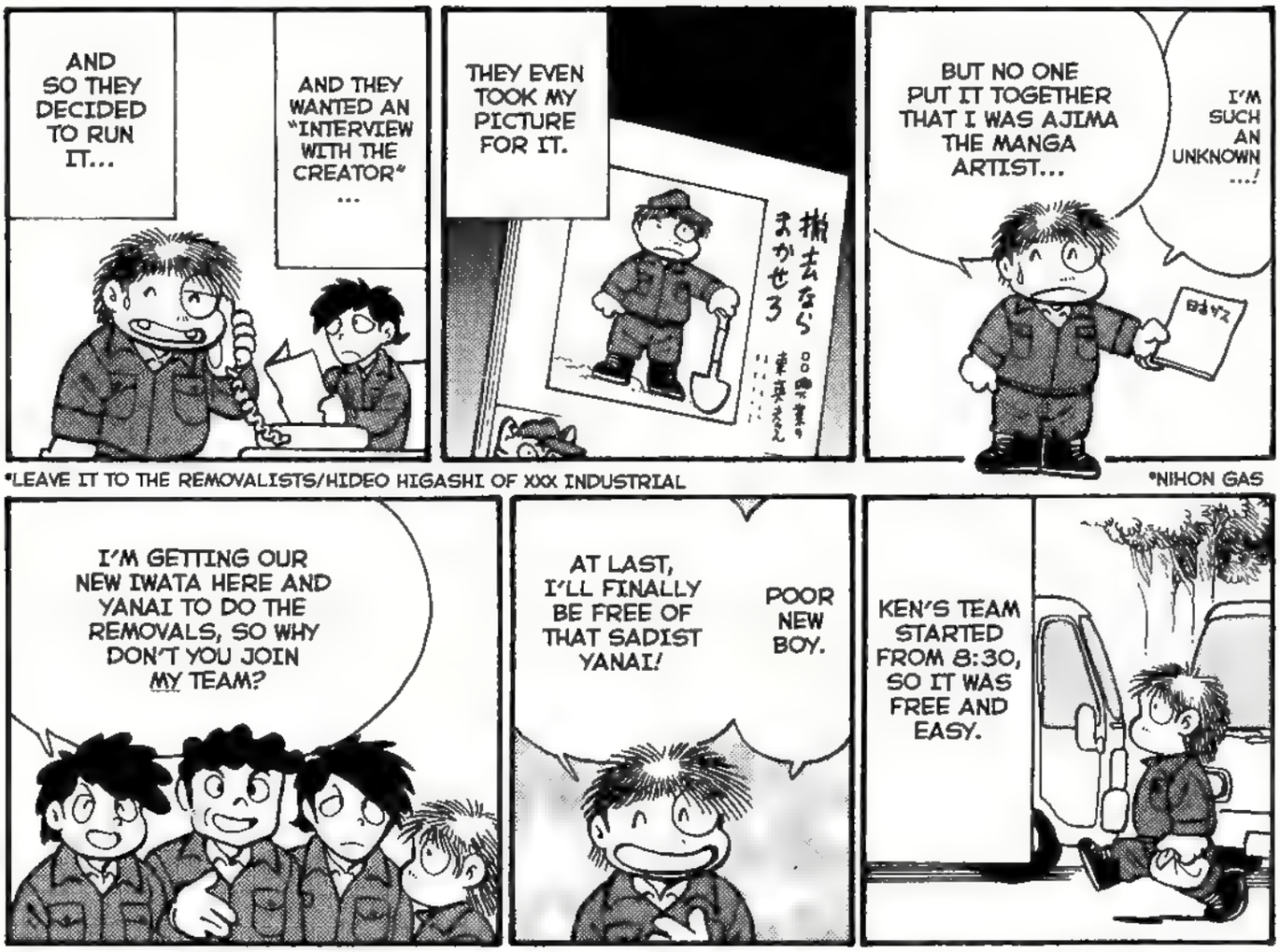

AH! RAIN! HEY! LOOK OVER THERE! SEE!? YOU CAN SEE THROUGH THAT CHICK'S BLOUSE!
TO BE SURE, WHENEVER I TALKED TO PEOPLE ABOUT HIM, THEY ONLY HAD BAD THINGS TO SAY. HE WAS SO MALICIOUS AND JUST TOLD DIRTY STORIES ALL THE TIME, BUT IT DIDN'T REALLY BOTHER ME. WHATEVER NASTY THINGS HE SAID TO ME, I HAD MY OWN PRIDE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! THE LOCATOR WON'T WORK LIKE THAT!
S-- SORRY!


SHIT! I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M DOING THIS WHEN I'M REALLY AN ARTIST!
WHEN I WAS HOMELESS I WANTED TO START WORKING. WHEN I DID PHYSICAL WORK, I WANTED TO BECOME AN ARTIST.
AROUND THIS TIME, I TOOK A LOOK AT THE NIHON GAS COMPANY NEWSLETTER.
OOH! TAKING ART SUBMI-SSIONS!
IT PROBABLY WASN'T WISE, BUT I ENDED UP DRAWING A COMIC AND SENDING IT IN.

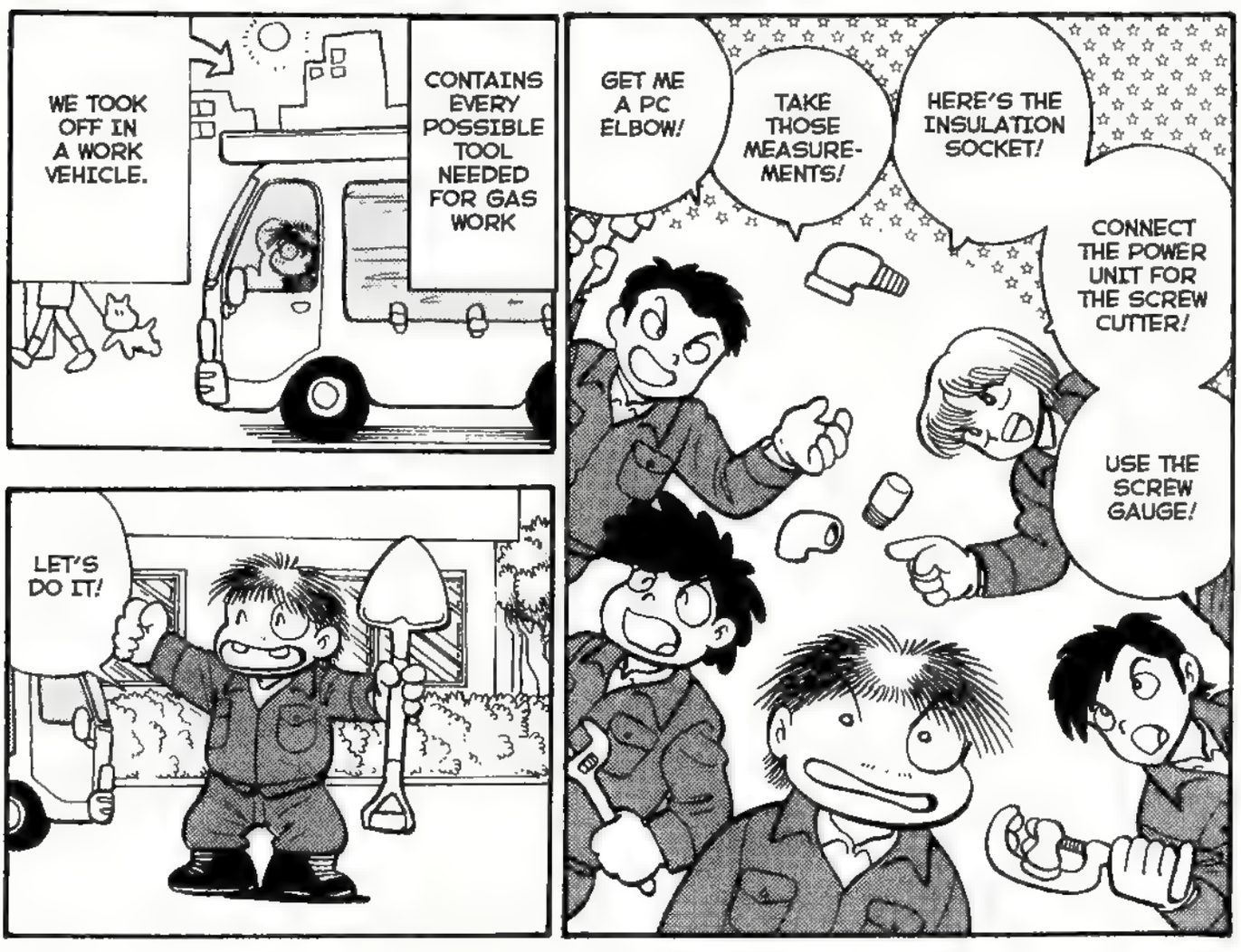
GAS CAT FROM THE GAS COMPANY

I'LL DO IT SO WATCH CLOSE! THIS IS HOW YA PUT THE PLUG IN!
ALL RIGHT! PULL IT!
HELLO! I'M LICCA-CHAN.*
SO... LICCA-CHAN, YOU WEARING SOME SEXY CLOTHES DOWN THERE?
NOT ME!
HOW 'BOUT COMIN' OUT FER A DRINK WITH ME THEN?
NO WAY!

*POPULAR DRESS-UP DOLL


AND SO THEY DECIDED TO RUN IT...
AND THEY WANTED AN "INTERVIEW WITH THE CREATOR" ...
THEY EVEN TOOK MY PICTURE FOR IT.
BUT NO ONE PUT IT TOGETHER THAT I WAS AJIMA THE MANGA ARTIST...
I'M SUCH AN UNKNOWN ...!
*LEAVE IT TO THE REMOVALISTS/HIDEO HIGASHI OF XXX INDUSTRIAL
*NIHON GAS

I'M GETTING OUR NEW IWATA HERE AND YANAI TO DO THE REMOVALS, SO WHY DON'T YOU JOIN MY TEAM?
AT LAST, I'LL FINALLY BE FREE OF THAT SADIST YANAI!
POOR NEW BOY.
KEN'S TEAM STARTED FROM 8:30, SO IT WAS FREE AND EASY.


WE TOOK OFF IN A WORK VEHICLE.
CONTAINS EVERY POSSIBLE TOOL NEEDED FOR GAS WORK
LET'S DO IT!
GET ME A PC ELBOW!
TAKE THOSE MEASURE-MENTS!
HERE'S THE INSULATION SOCKET!
CONNECT THE POWER UNIT FOR THE SCREW CUTTER!
USE THE SCREW GAUGE!

I'D NEVER DONE ANYTHING BUT REMOVAL WORK, SO I DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT INDOOR PIPING.
AAH! I'LL DIG THAT HOLE! I'LL DIG IT!
SHKK
SHKK
STOP DIGGING! I'LL DO IT! I'LL DO IT!
HAHHH ...
IT'S HARD JUST NOT KNOWING WHAT I OUGHT TO BE DOING!
GRR GRR GRR
OOH!
I'LL SCRAPE OUT THE CONCRETE RUBBLE! I'LL DO IT!
GRR GRR GRR
GRR GRR GRR
THE ONE WHO MADE THE HOLE, YOSHI MURA (NOT HIS REAL NAME)
WATER PIPE
SHS SS SSS
SHSSSS
HMM... WONDER WHAT WE'RE SUPPOSED TO DO...

AS THE SEASONS PASSED, IT GOT SO I COULD TALK MORE FREELY WITH THE PEOPLE IN THE BOSS'S TEAM.
LOOK! A PERFECT TILES JOB! I COULD BECOME A TILE SETTER!
A COMMON JOKE AMONG GAS PEOPLE.
HERE! I FINISHED THE PC ELBOW JOINT!
THE POPULAR, MISTER "GAN"
HEY, THAT WAS FAST!
GAN, I DID THAT!
WE HAD BIG YAKINIKU PARTIES AT THE BOSS'S HOUSE.
MISTER AZUMA, THAT HASN'T BEEN COOKED YET!
THE BOSS HAD GOTTEN RE-MARRIED, AND HIS WIFE WAS A BEAUTY FROM SOME OTHER COUNTRY.
EVERYONE SAID IT WAS A CRIME.
I WAS MINDLESSLY DIGGING A HOLE AS USUAL, WHEN KEN SAID...
MISTER AZUMA, HOW ABOUT SOME TRAINING COURSES?
YOU'LL STILL GET PAID, THOUGH A BIT LESS, AND YOU'LL BE WITH THREE OTHER PEOPLE WHO JUST JOINED US.
LITTLE DID I KNOW, BUT APPARENTLY GAS PIPE FITTERS NEED SOME KIND OF TRAINING.
THE STUDENTS WERE LITERATE MISTER IWATA, FAN OF MORIO KITA
UESHITA, FORMER TAX ACCOUNTANT, NOW DREAMING OF A COMMUNIST JAPAN
MYSTE-RIOUS YOUTH "A"
AND ME
FORMER DRIVER
WORKERS UNITE! REFUSE TO WORK ON RAINY DAYS!
HAVE YOU READ "NIREKE NO HITOBITO"?
UHH, SORT OF...
YOUTH "A" GOT OTHER PEOPLE TO PAY FOR HIS COFFEE, AND QUIT ALMOST IMMEDIATELY.

THE INSTRUCTOR WAS AN OLD PRO, MISTER YOSHIOKA.

HE HAD AN EASY-GOING FACE, BUT HE USED A LOT OF TECHNIQUES AND TRAINED US HARD.

THE TEXTBOOKS STARTED WITH GAS HISTORY AND EVEN PROMETHEUS.

AT FIRST WE MEMORIZED STUFF AND TOOK QUIZZES. I THOUGHT IT WAS KIND OF EASY...

BUT THEN WE GOT PRACTICAL.

*DOMICILE PIPE SETTING/AN INTRODUCTION TO GAS INDUSTRY EQUIPMENT/PIPE METHOD

STOPPER
NIPPLE
PIPE CUTTER
CHEESE
ELBOW (WITH SCREW END)

NAMES OF PIPE INDUSTRIAL TOOLS AND PIPE FITTING SYSTEMS ...

GRAPPLING WITH THE SCREW THREAD CUTTER

CALCULATING MEASUREMENTS

THEN, PIPE FITTING FROM DIAGRAMS.

AT THIS POINT I FINALLY LEARNED WHAT A PIPE FITTER DOES, AND DISCOVERED THINGS THAT MAKE GAS PIPE FITTING INTERESTING.

GAS CAT FROM THE GAS COMPANY 2

THAT'S NIHON GAS'S SETAGAYA BRANCH OFFICE!

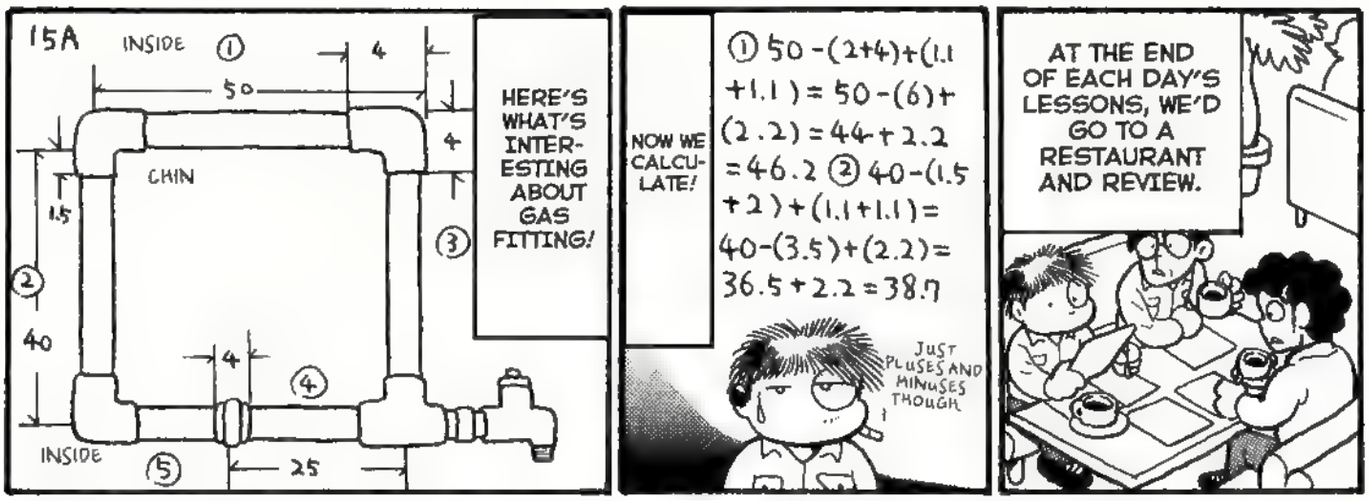
THAT SURE IS A HUGE GAS TANK, HUH!

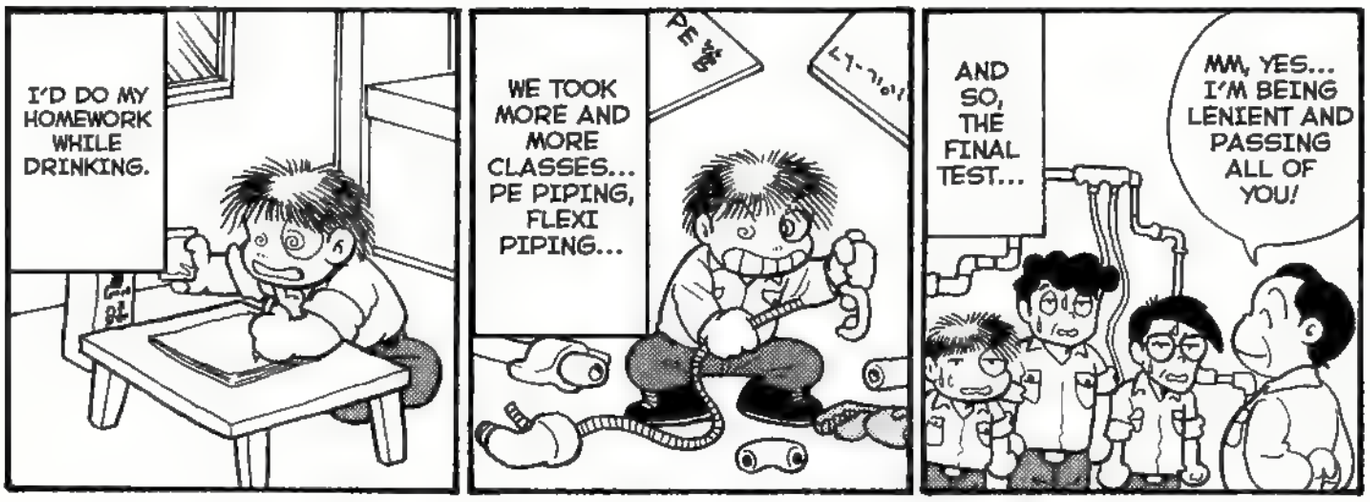
THEY'RE OFFICALLY CALLED "GAS HOLDERS." ACCORDING TO THE LEGEND, ONCE EVERY HUNDRED YEARS A GIGANTIC 50M CAT APPEARS...

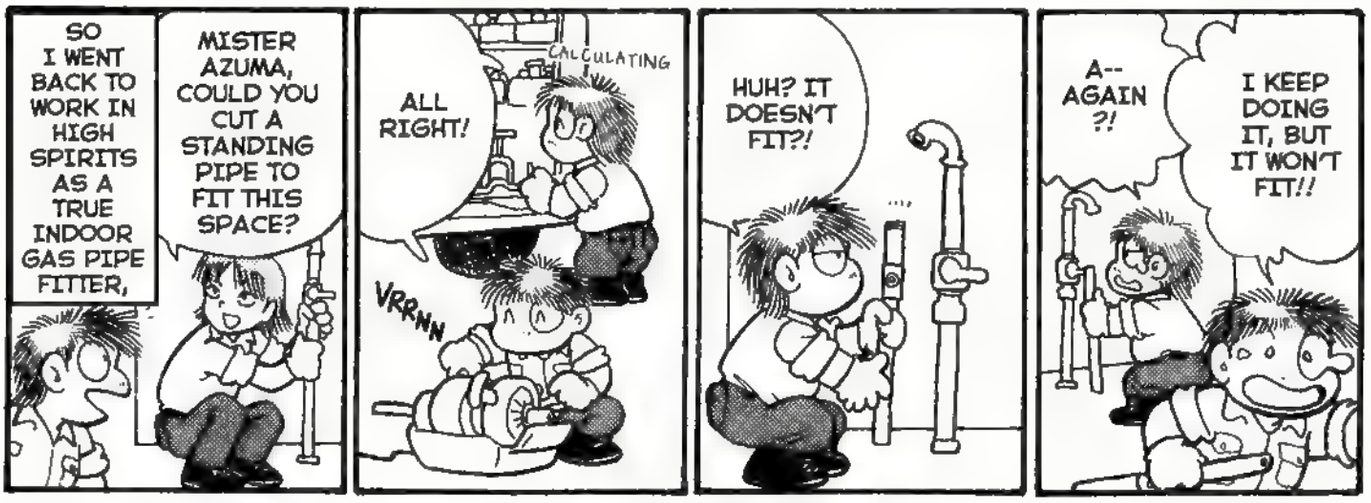
AND PLAYS WITH THE GAS HOLDERS, AND THEN TAKES ONE AWAY WITH IT SOMEWHERE!

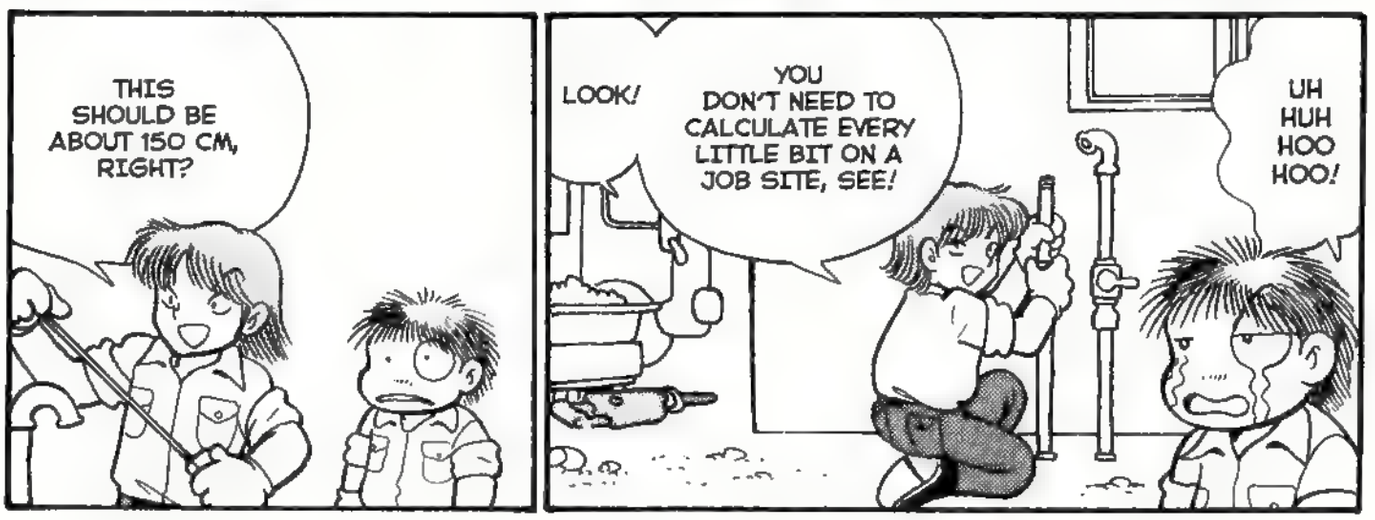
AND THAT'S WHY THERE ARE ONLY THREE LEFT!

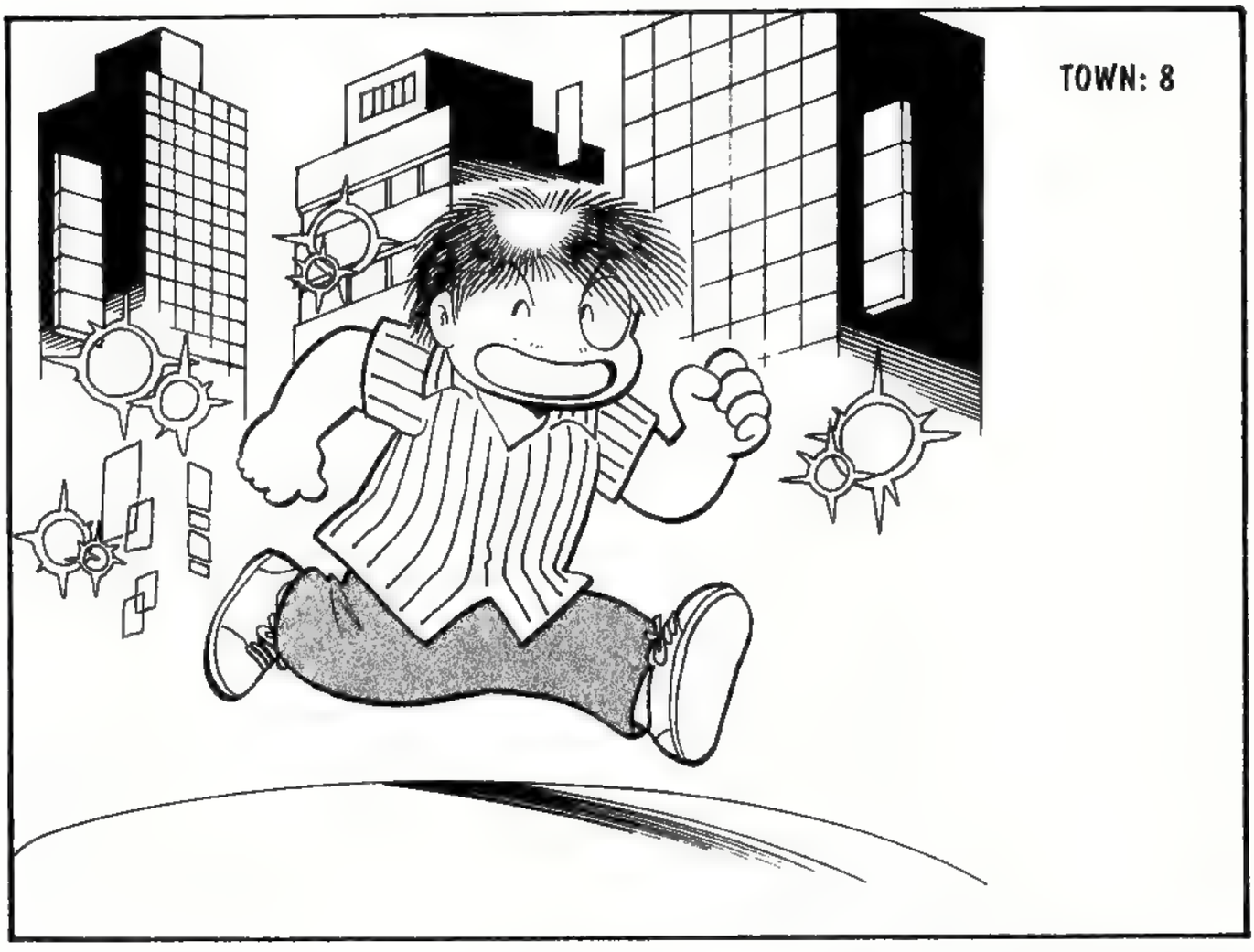
WOWWW!


15A
INSIDE
①
50
4
4
CHIN
1.5
②
40
③
4
④
INSIDE
⑤
25
HERE'S WHAT'S INTERESTING ABOUT GAS FITTING!
NOW WE CALCULATE!
① 50-(2+4)+(1.1+1.1)=50-(6)+(2.2)=44+2.2=46.2 ② 40-(1.5+2)+(1.1+1.1)=40-(3.5)+(2.2)=36.5+2.2=38.7
JUST PLUSES AND MINUSES THOUGH.
AT THE END OF EACH DAY'S LESSONS, WE'D GO TO A RESTAURANT AND REVIEW.

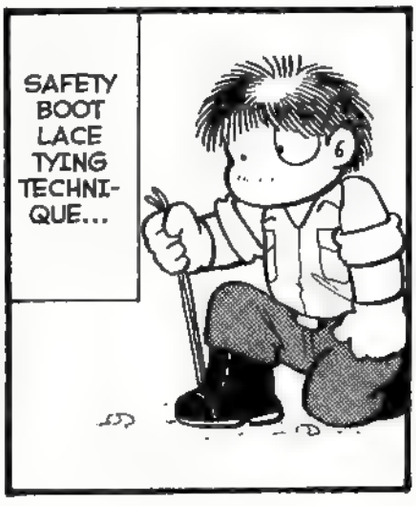

I'D DO MY HOMEWORK WHILE DRINKING.
WE TOOK MORE AND MORE CLASSES... PE PIPING, FLEXI PIPING...
PE
フレキ
AND SO, THE FINAL TEST...
MM, YES... I'M BEING LENIENT AND PASSING ALL OF YOU!


SO I WENT BACK TO WORK IN HIGH SPIRITS AS A TRUE INDOOR GAS PIPE FITTER,
MISTER AZUMA, COULD YOU CUT A STANDING PIPE TO FIT THIS SPACE?
ALL RIGHT!
CALCULATING
VRRNN
HUH? IT DOESN'T FIT?!
A-- AGAIN ?!
I KEEP DOING IT, BUT IT WON'T FIT!!


THIS SHOULD BE ABOUT 150 CM, RIGHT?
LOOK!
YOU DON'T NEED TO CALCULATE EVERY LITTLE BIT ON A JOB SITE, SEE!
UH HUH HOO HOO!


TOWN: 8

SO AT LAST I'D GOTTEN MY TRAINING AS AN INDOOR PIPE FITTER, I UNDERSTOOD THE BASICS OF GAS PIPE FITTING, AND ALL OF A SUDDEN WORK BECAME FUN.


SAFETY BOOT LACE TYING TECHNI-QUE...

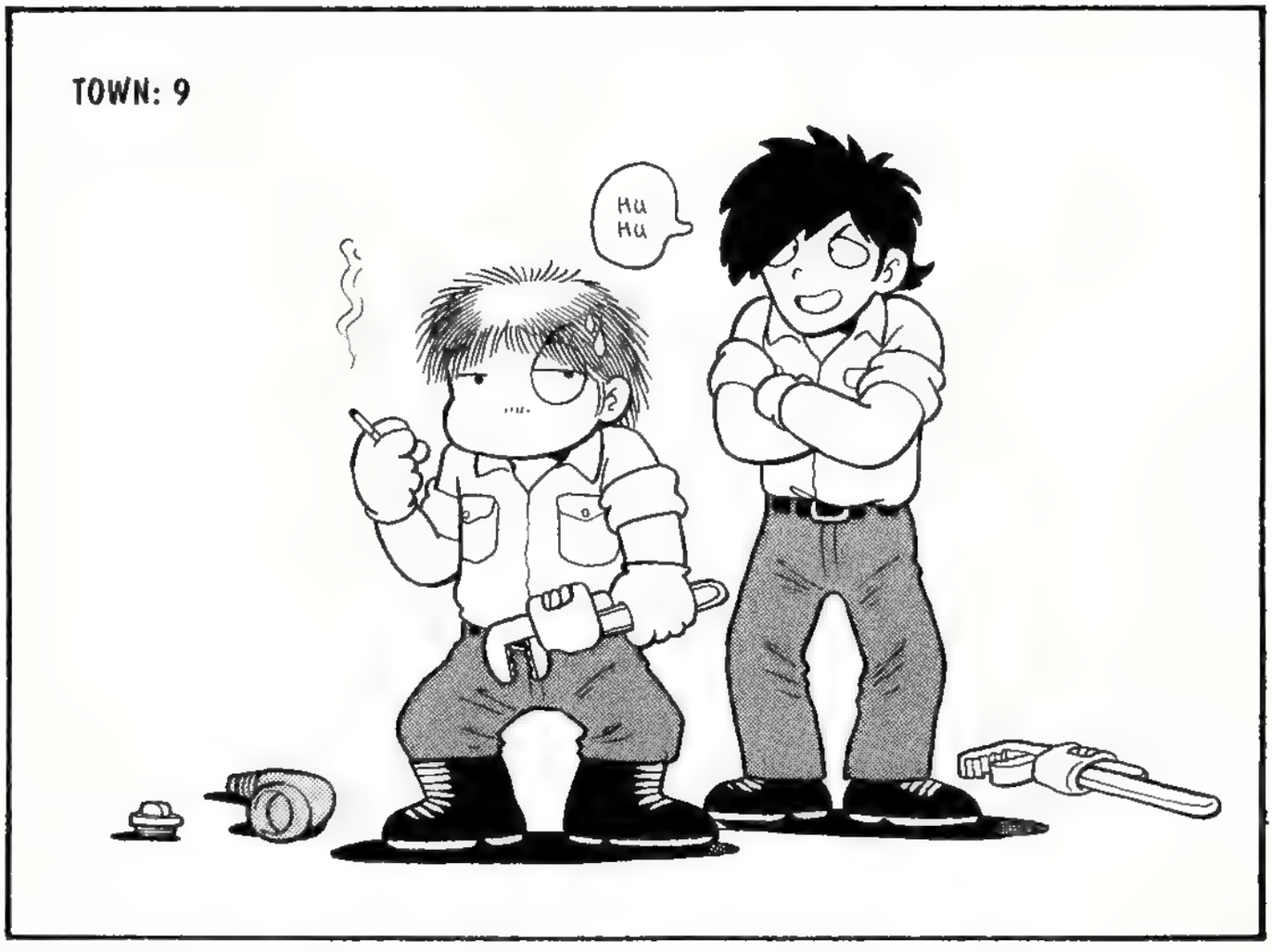
WHIP
WHIP
WHIP

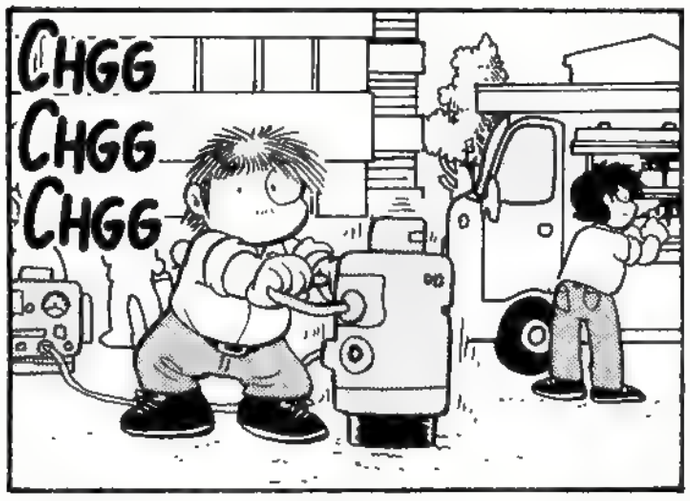
...AND AROUND AND PULL!
THIS MADE ME LOOK LIKE A COOL VETERAN SO I PRACTICED IT.

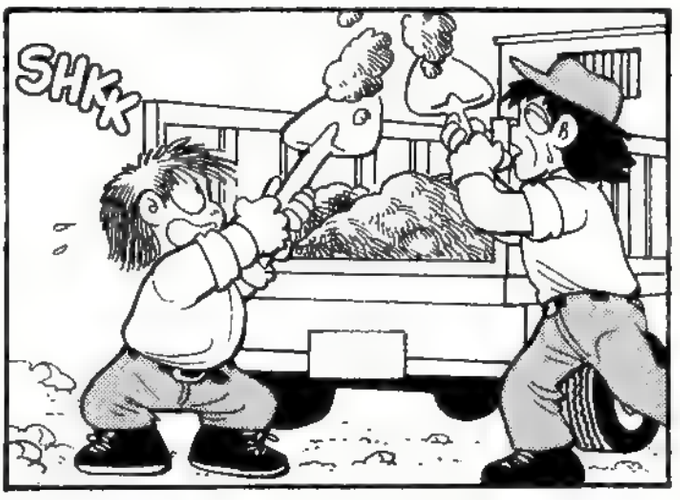
MISTER AZUMA! GOT A SEC?

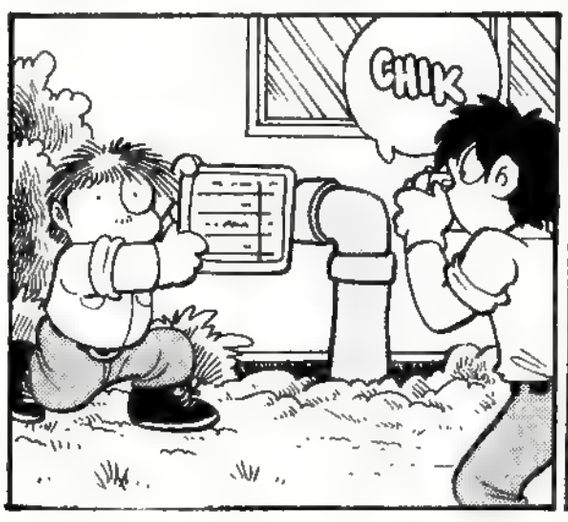
PIPE WRENCH, RIGHT?
FWISH
YEAH...
ALSO A STOPPER AND CAP, PLUS A PLUG AND MONKEY WRENCH!
IT GOT SO I COULD PREDICT THE FUTURE (OF THE JOB).
PHHH
MEASURING GAS PRESSURE BY BLOWING INTO THE GAUGE TO GET A READING
I NEVER LEARNED THAT TECHNIQUE.
AFTER WELDING JUST ONE IRON BAR INTO THE CONCRETE FOUNDATION, THEY'D TAKE A PICTURE TO MAKE IT LOOK LEGIT...
GZZT
THEN JUST COVER IT WITH CEMENT AS USUAL.
UH, THAT'S KINDA CHEATING... BUT WHATEVER.
AHHH!
AFTER WORK AND A BATH, LIQUOR TASTES EVEN BETTER!
NOKK NOKK
MISTER AZUMA, I'D LIKE TO TALK ABOUT THE LORD...
YOU AGAIN?
SINCE I WAS DRUNK, I WAS IN A GENEROUS MOOD AND ENDED UP LISTENING TO HIS SPIEL.
WAHAHA! THIS ILLUSTRATION OF THE 1000 YEAR KINGDOM IS HILARIOUS!
*WATCHTOWER
WELL, THEN, LET'S READ THE BIBLE TOGETHER, MISTER AZUMA!
NGZZZ~
AND THEN ONE DAY, THE GREAT KING OF TERROR ARRIVED.
BRRING
THAT 2ND FLOOR ALARM CLOCK'S LOUD AS HELL!
NOKK NOKK
I LIVE NEAR HERE. THAT ANNOYING ALARM CLOCK'S IN THIS APARTMENT BLOCK, ISN'T IT!
OH, I KNOW!

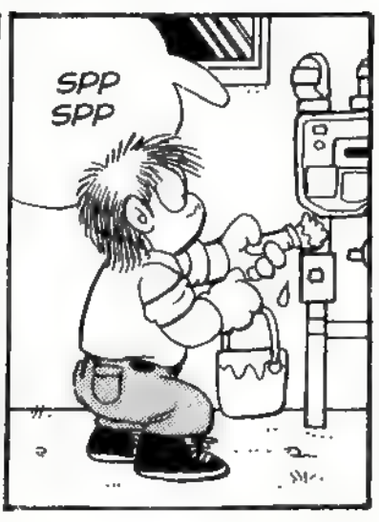
I TOLD HIM TO TURN IT OFF.
GREAT. YOU DO GAS WORK TOO, RIGHT?
I DO PIPE LAYING PLANS. THAT MAKES ME YOUR SUPERIOR, SO TO SPEAK!
NO. THERE'RE NO RANKS IN THIS TRADE -- ABOVE OR BELOW.
WANNA GO FOR A DRINK? MY TREAT!
YOU BET!!
THE BARS AROUND HERE ARE TOTALLY DICEY. HOW ABOUT KICHIJOJI?
?
WE FOUND A SUITABLE PUB AND STARTED DRINKING, WHEN...
HEHHH
THE EYES OF A MADMAN
LET ME DO YA, YA BROAD!
AFTER ALL, YOU XXXX WITH XXXX EVERY DAY, DON'T YOU?!
HEY! OLD MAN! YER A HOMO, AIN'TCHA!
YOU XXXX HOMO BASTARD! WHY DON'T YOU GO XXXX!
THE GREAT KING OF TERROR'S HOBBY WAS GETTING MIXED UP WITH PEOPLE AND STARTING FIGHTS WITH THEM.
NATURALLY, I TOLD HIM I HAD TO GO USE THE PHONE, AND RAN FOR MY LIFE.
LUNATICS! THE WORLD'S FULL OF LUNATICS!


TOWN: 9
Hu
Hu


CHGG
CHGG
CHGG


SHKK


CHIK


SPP
SPP

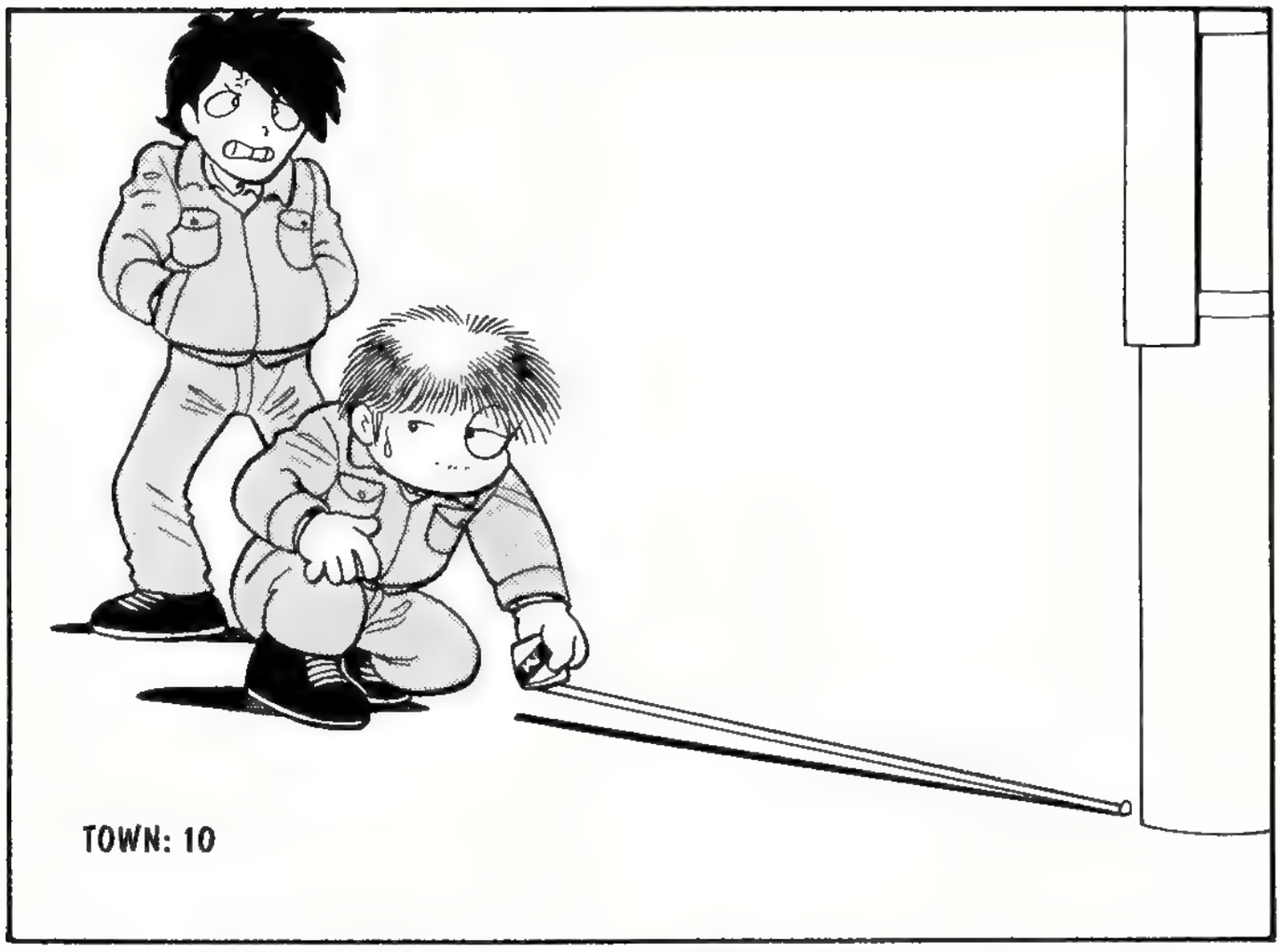
I'VE GOTTEN SO USED TO MY JOB, DAYS LIKE TODAY ARE A BREEZE.

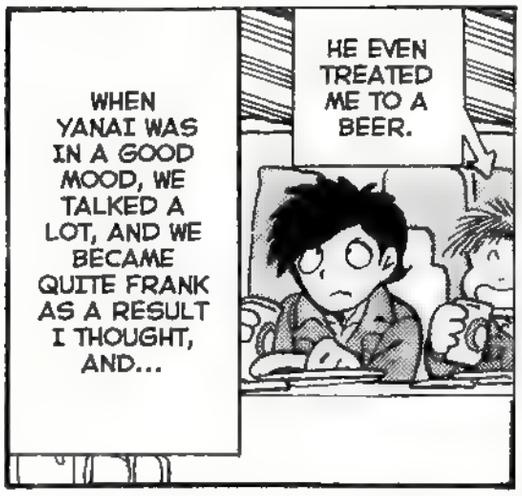
JUST A SECOND THERE. IS THAT YOUR OWN BICYCLE?
Y-- YES...
HOW COME THE REGISTRATION NUMBER'S BEEN SCRAPED OFF?
IT WAS MISTER UEMORI, THE ALCOHOLIC, WHO GAVE ME THE BIKE. HE TOLD ME TO SCRAPE IT OFF.
GET RID OF IT! GET RID OF IT!
?
SCRAPE SCRAPE
THIS IS A STOLEN BIKE, ISN'T IT? COME WITH ME!
THIS WAS THAT OLD BASTARD UEMORI'S STOLEN BIKE INCIDENT I MENTIONED BEFORE.
ONE MORE THING, MISTER AZUMA. THERE'S A MISSING PERSON REQUEST OUT FOR YOU.
OH... UHH...
AFTER THAT THEY TOOK MY FINGERPRINTS, GAVE ME A STERN TALKING TO, AND MY WIFE CAME TO GET ME AND TOOK ME HOME (ABBREVIATED BECAUSE NONE OF THIS WAS FUNNY).
I STARTED GOING TO WORK FROM HOME.
THIS TIME I HAD A LEGIT BIKE FROM THE BOSS.
ONE TIME WHEN WE DID PIPE FITTING FOR A SUSHI PLACE, THEY LET US ALL HAVE SUSHI FOR FREE.
IT'S THE CHEAP UN-ROLLED STUFF THOUGH. NOT THAT I CARE.
I LEARNED HOW HOT FRESH ASPHALT WITH GRAVEL IN IT IS.
ON PAYDAY, THE BOSS TREATED US TO DINNER AT A FAMILY RESTAURANT.
WAITRESS! WATER!!
IN-YOUR-FACE NEW GUY
WHENEVER I RODE IN THE CAR WITH THE PEOPLE-HATING MISTER Y, THE WHOLE WAY TO THE SITE HE NEVER SAID A WORD.
.....
I WASN'T SO GOOD AT TALKING MYSELF THOUGH, SO IT DIDN'T BOTHER ME.

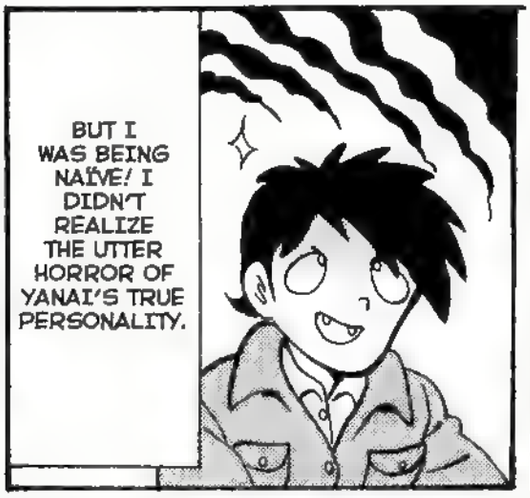
I HAD STEAK FOR THE OCCASION

ON MY WAY HOME DRUNK...
EEEK!
SKREE~~
I WAS NEARLY HIT BY A CAR.
I BELTED 'EM OUT AT KARAOKE.
ONE OF MY BEST ROUTINES.
KEEPING ← THEIR → DISTANCE
MISTER AZUMA, ONE OF THE TEAM CAN'T WORK 'CAUSE OF BACK PROBLEMS. HOW ABOUT GOING BACK TO REMOVAL?
BWHA --?!
HEH HEH HEH!
MAYBE I'LL END UP MARRYING SOME CHICK I MEET THROUGH PHONE DATING, HUH!
I WAS WORKING WITH YANAI AGAIN.
UH HUH.
SOON, AT THE SITE...
HUH?! THIS IS A SHARED PIPE...?
THE PIPE STOPS HERE, EH.
YUP!
I DON'T KNOW IF THE PLANS ARE RIGHT OR WRONG OR WHAT! LET'S JUST CUT IT!
GUHHS
GUHHS
KUNK

EXCUSE ME! OUR GAS HAS STOPPED!
WHA--?!
OH! THERE'S A FLEXI PIPE EXTENSION COMING OUT HERE!
FLEXIPIPE: A GAS PIPE MADE WITH RINGS. WITH A SIMPLE FITTING IT CAN ACT AS AN EXTENSION FROM ANOTHER PIPE.
WE QUICKLY ATTACH THE PIPE...
AND PUT THE METER BACK.
BEEP BEEP
HEH HEH HEH! THAT WAS KINDA CLOSE!
HM? MY PAGER?
Y-- YES... YES...
.....
WAS IT ABOUT THE LAST SITE?
YOU IDIOT! HOW MANY YEARS HAVE YOU BEEN DOING THIS JOB?!
A BIGWIG FROM HQ, MISTER TAKADA
EMERGENCY VEHICLES HAD ALREADY ARRIVED AT THE SITE. THE REPORT HAD COME IN THAT THE PIPES CONNECTED TO THE METER WEREN'T PACKED AND GAS WAS LEAKING.
UHHRR ...
NOT MY PROBLEM. I PUT MY PACKING IN.

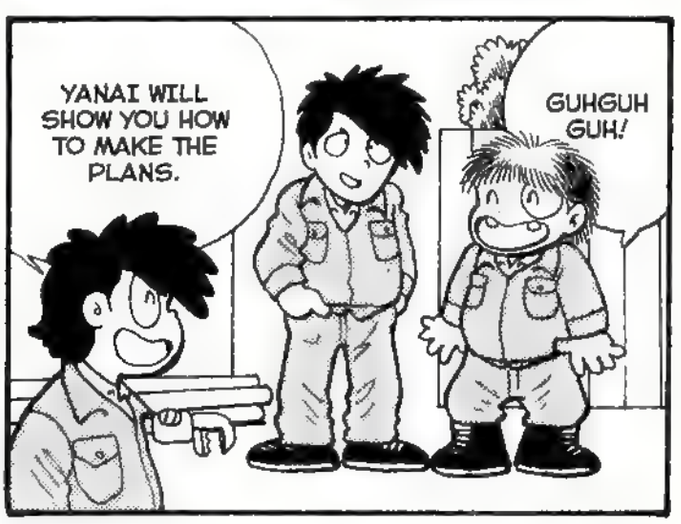

TOWN: 10


WHEN YANAI WAS IN A GOOD MOOD, WE TALKED A LOT, AND WE BECAME QUITE FRANK AS A RESULT I THOUGHT, AND...
HE EVEN TREATED ME TO A BEER.


BUT I WAS BEING NAÏVE! I DIDN'T REALIZE THE UTTER HORROR OF YANAI'S TRUE PERSONALITY.

KEN, THE BOSS:
MISTER AZUMA...

I'M GOING TO MOVE YANAI AROUND TO ANOTHER TEAM. MISTER AZUMA, YOU'LL BE TEAMED UP WITH SOME YOUNG PEOPLE AND IN CHARGE OF REMOVALS.
WHA --?!

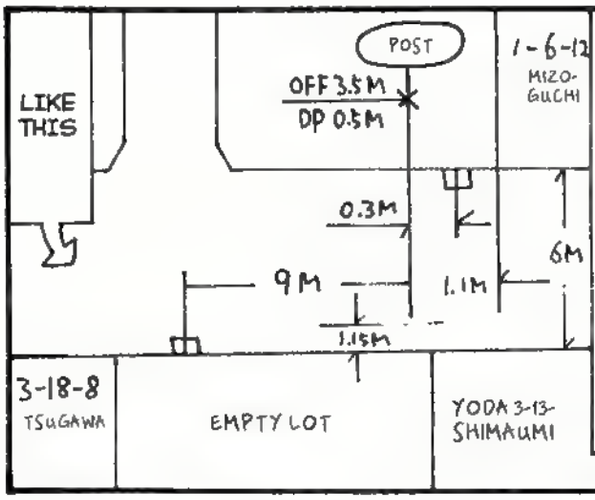

YANAI WILL SHOW YOU HOW TO MAKE THE PLANS.
GUHGUH GUH!

UNTIL NOW, I'D BEEN DIGGING HOLES AND PULLING OFF METERS, HAPPILY JUST DOING AS I WAS TOLD.

BUT BEING IN CHARGE MEANT I HAD TO DRAW UP DIAGRAMS AND WRITE UP THE REMOVAL DOCUMENTS, AND I NEEDED TO BE TAUGHT ALL THIS.

FIRST IS DRAWING UP THE PLAN. GO FOR IT.

LIKE THIS



THE PLAN SHOWS WHERE THE GAS PIPES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE CUT, ENTERED USING A 3-POINT METHOD.

I MEASURE THE DISTANCES BETWEEN ANY LANDMARKS LIKE ELECTRICITY POSTS, MANHOLES, AND PATH WAYS AND MAKE NOTES.

IS THIS ALL RIGHT?

YOU DIDN'T MEASURE THE WIDTH OF THE ROADS!

HOW 'BOUT NOW...?

YOU FORGOT THE DP!

LOOK UP THE BLOCK NUMBERS FOR THE NEIGHBORING HOUSES TOO!

AFTER WE'D FINISHED WORK AT THE SITE, I BORROWED A DESK AT THE MAIN OFFICE TO MAKE A CLEAN COPY OF MY NOTES AND ALSO WRITE UP THE REMOVAL FORMS.

YOU DIDN'T PUT ANY FEATHERS ON THE ARROWS!

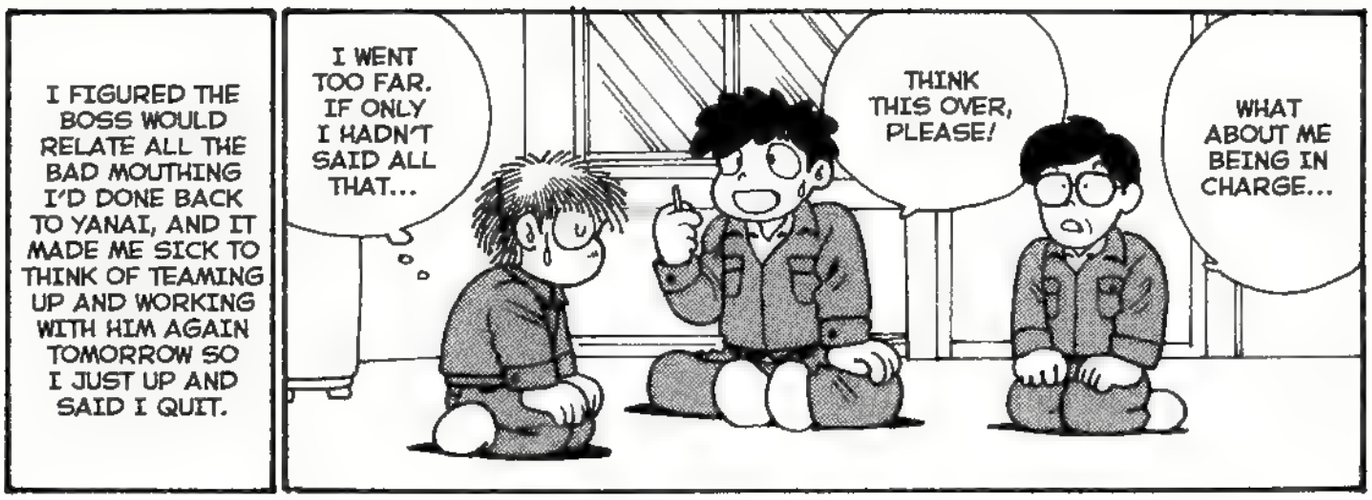
YOU DIDN'T STAMP IN THE MARKS FOR POSTS! AND YOU FORGOT THE RED "X"ES!!

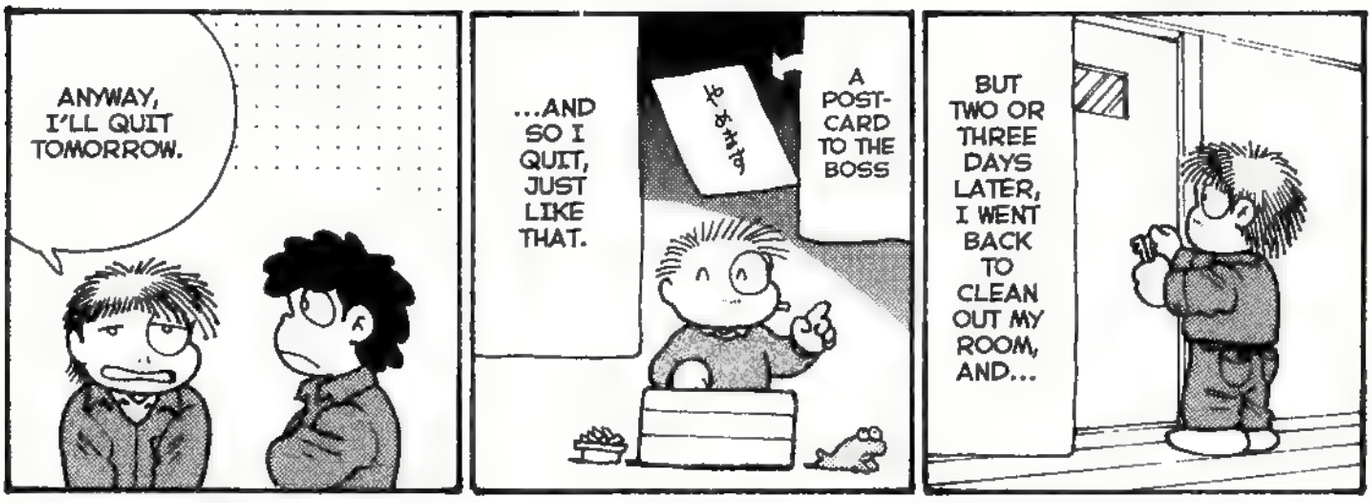
NO! NO! NO!
DRAWING UP THIS PLAN TOOK TWO HOURS.
YOU'VE GOT YOUR OWN STYLE OF TEACHING THINGS, DON'T YA, YANAI! HAHAHA!
MISTER ODA OF HEAD OFFICE
TOO MUCH STYLE IF YOU ASK ME.
SO MANY ROOKIES HAVE QUIT SO FAR AND THIS IS THE REASON...
I WENT HOME AND REVIEWED THE DAY'S WORK.
AT THE NEXT DAY'S SITE...
MAN! THIS IS NO GOOD!
LIKE THIS! HERE! HERE!
I REWRITE ...
YOU FORGOT!
WRONG!
NO!
GRR HRR HRR
HIS EYES SCARED THE CRAP OUT OF ME...
THIS ISN'T RIGHT FOR YOU! MISTER YANAI, YOU SHOULDN'T BE TEACHING ANYONE!
INCIDENTALLY, RAMO NAKAJIMA WAS SERIALIZING HIS HEAVY DRINKING STORIES IN A MONTHLY NOVEL MAGAZINE... I WONDER IF HE'S OKAY?
HE WASN'T OKAY. YOU DID YOUR BEST, RAMO. WE PRAY FOR YOU.

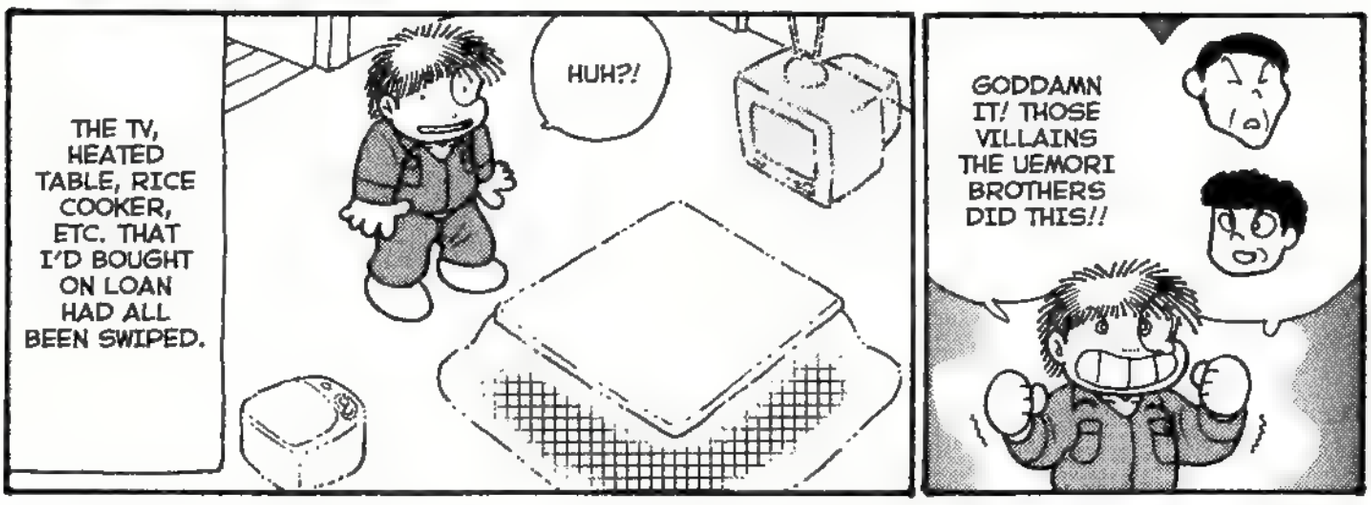
TOWN: 11
WELL THEN...
TO BECOME THE ONE IN CHARGE OF REMOVALS, I HAD TO ENDURE YANAI'S BULLYING EVERY DAY.
I'LL NEVER BE IN CHARGE! GOD, I WANT TO QUIT!
MORNING ADDRESS ...
EVERY SINGLE GANTAKUN SALE COUNTS!
CHECKING REMOVAL APPLICA-TIONS...
LOOKING UP CLIENT NUMBERS ON THE COMPUTER...
'CAUSE LABORERS ARE GREAT WITH COMPUTERS.
GETTING OUT APACHES (ENORMOUS MAPS).

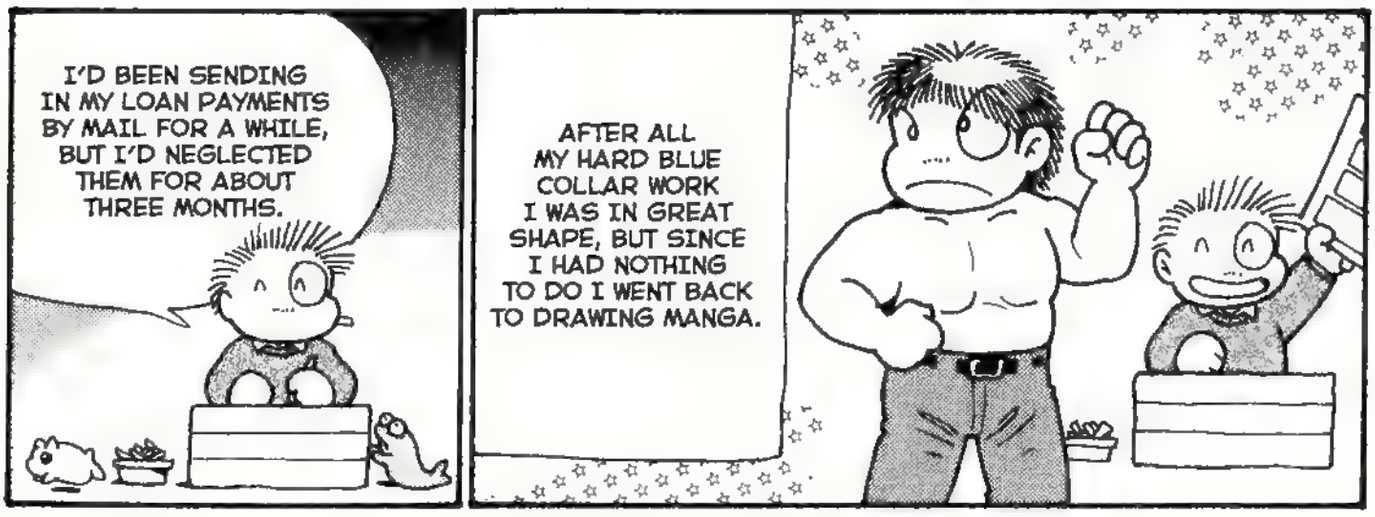
GETTING RAGGED OUT 'CAUSE IT'S ALL WRONG.
ON SITE ...
YANAI'S EYES, TERRIFYING AS ALWAYS.
GO BACK TO THE MAIN OFFICE, WRITE UP THE REMOVAL FORMS, HAVE EVERY MISTAKE POINTED OUT ONE BY ONE.
THE NEXT DAY, MISTER UESHITA, WHO I TRAINED WITH, SHOWS UP.
THAT YOUNG GUY QUIT SO YANAI'S BEEN TOLD TO TEAM UP WITH YOU AND I.
THAT DAY THE THREE OF US WORKED TOGETHER.
GRUMBLE GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE GRUMBLE
GRUMBLE GRUMBLE GRUMBLE GRUMBLE
WHAT THE HELL IS WRONG WITH THAT BASTARD YANAI ANYWAY?!!
UESHITA SNAPPED AFTER JUST ONE DAY WITH HIM.
AND I'VE BEEN DEALING WITH THAT FOR OVER A YEAR.

WHEN WE GOT BACK TO THE APARTMENT, WE HAD A YANAI BASHING FESTIVAL.
IF YANAI EVER LOSES HIS POST, YOU TAKE OVER FOR HIM, OKAY?
HA! SURE!
MISTER AZUMA, YOU HERE?
OH! BOSS!
OH, YOU'RE HERE TOO, UESHITA. HOW'S YANAI'S TEACHING TECHNIQUE?
WELL, THE THING IS...
I VENTED.
HMM...
IF HE PISSES YOU OFF THAT MUCH, MISTER AZUMA, YOU CAN JUST CLOCK HIM ONE!
NOW THAT HE MENTIONED IT, IT SOUNDED REASONABLE, BUT IT WASN'T MY NATURE.
I'M QUITTING.
MISTER AZUMA, NO!
YOU JUST SAID YOU WANTED ME IN HIS PLACE...


I FIGURED THE BOSS WOULD RELATE ALL THE BAD MOUTHING I'D DONE BACK TO YANAI, AND IT MADE ME SICK TO THINK OF TEAMING UP AND WORKING WITH HIM AGAIN TOMORROW SO I JUST UP AND SAID I QUIT.
I WENT TOO FAR. IF ONLY I HADN'T SAID ALL THAT...
THINK THIS OVER, PLEASE!
WHAT ABOUT ME BEING IN CHARGE...


ANYWAY, I'LL QUIT TOMORROW.
...AND SO I QUIT, JUST LIKE THAT.
A POST-CARD TO THE BOSS
BUT TWO OR THREE DAYS LATER, I WENT BACK TO CLEAN OUT MY ROOM, AND...


THE TV, HEATED TABLE, RICE COOKER, ETC. THAT I'D BOUGHT ON LOAN HAD ALL BEEN SWIPED.
HUH?!
GODDAMN IT! THOSE VILLAINS THE UEMORI BROTHERS DID THIS!!


I'D BEEN SENDING IN MY LOAN PAYMENTS BY MAIL FOR A WHILE, BUT I'D NEGLECTED THEM FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS.
AFTER ALL MY HARD BLUE COLLAR WORK I WAS IN GREAT SHAPE, BUT SINCE I HAD NOTHING TO DO I WENT BACK TO DRAWING MANGA.

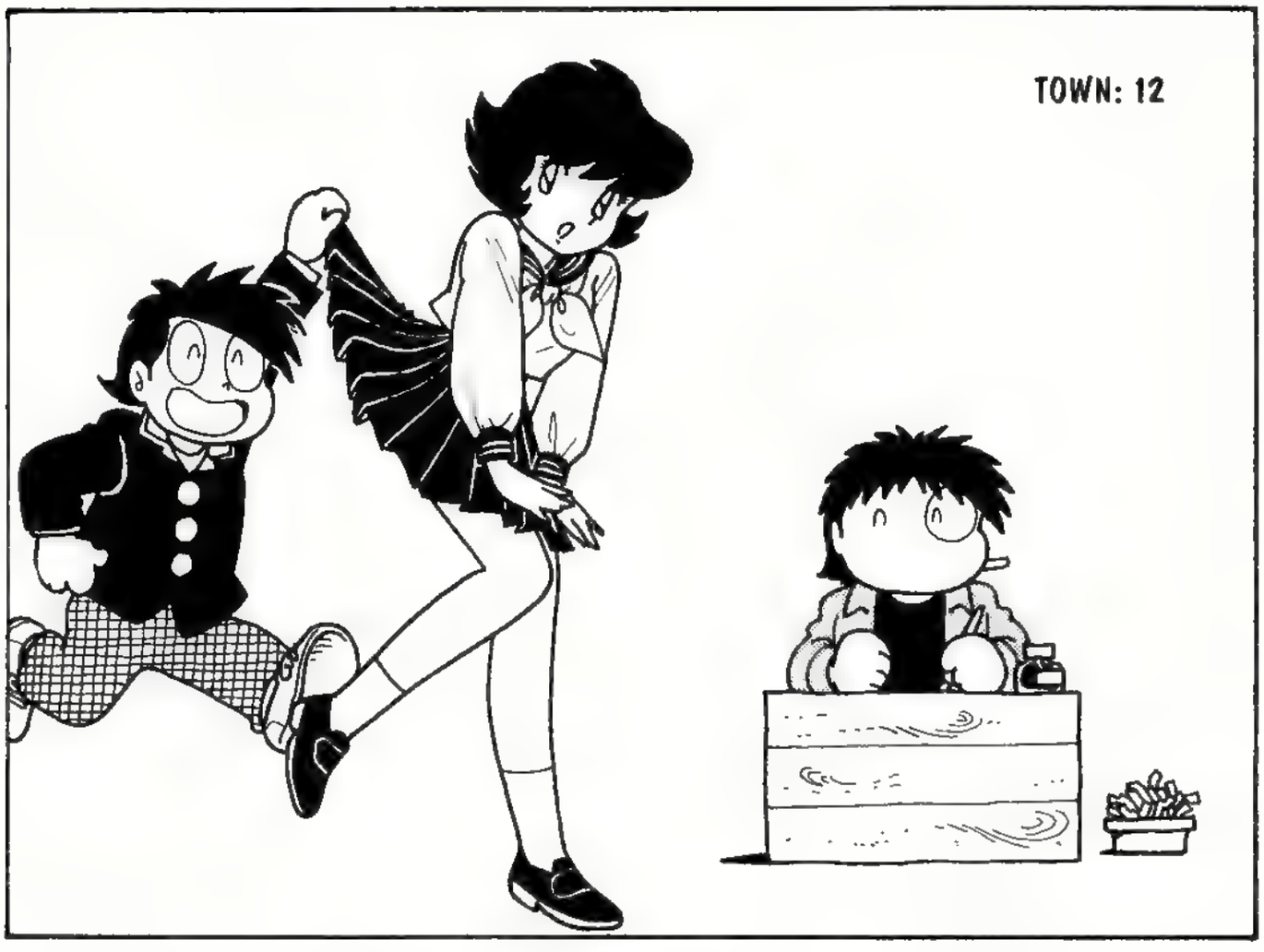
I HELD EXHIBITIONS AND SALES AND SENT OUT SUBMI-SSIONS, AND WORK STARTED COMING IN...
COSPLAY OKUSAMA
MANIAC RUI-CHAN
GINGA HORO
I WAS DOING TWENTY PAGES A MONTH.
MAGICAL MYSTERY MAO-CHAN
I WAS DOING WELL AROUND THIS TIME...
BUT AT THE SAME TIME I WAS HURTLING DOWN THE ROAD TO ALCOHOLISM.
UHH... I HARDLY DRANK AT ALL IN MY EARLY TWENTIES.
BUT FOR SOME REASON, MY FIRST SERIALIZED MANGA WAS "FUTSUKAYOI DANDY"
MAYBE I WANTED TO BE A DRINKER!

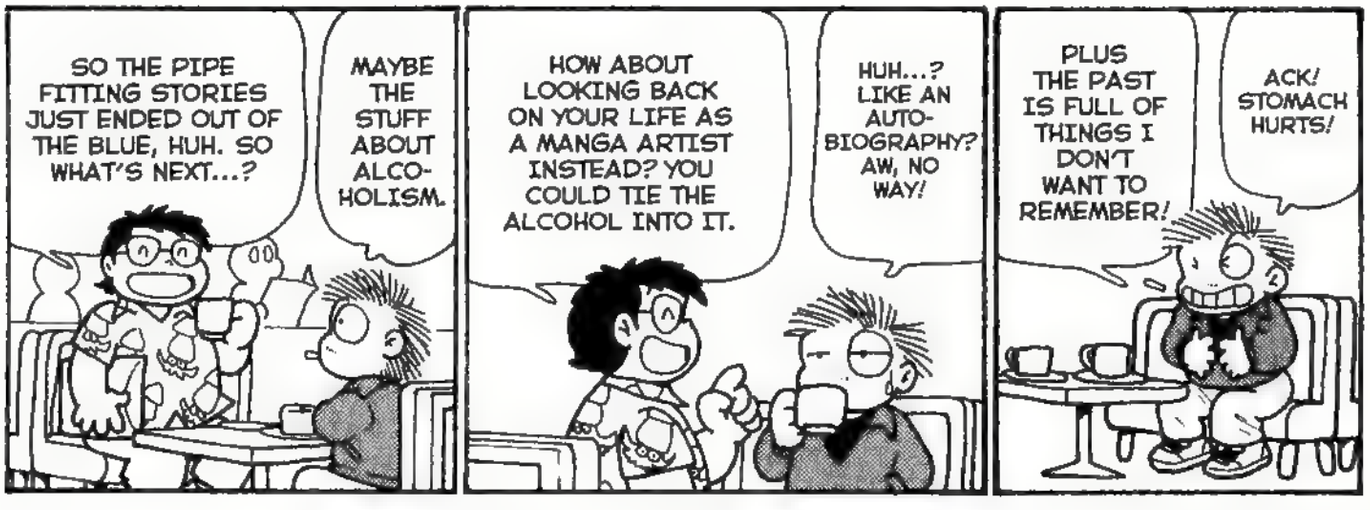
*GALACTIC TRAMP

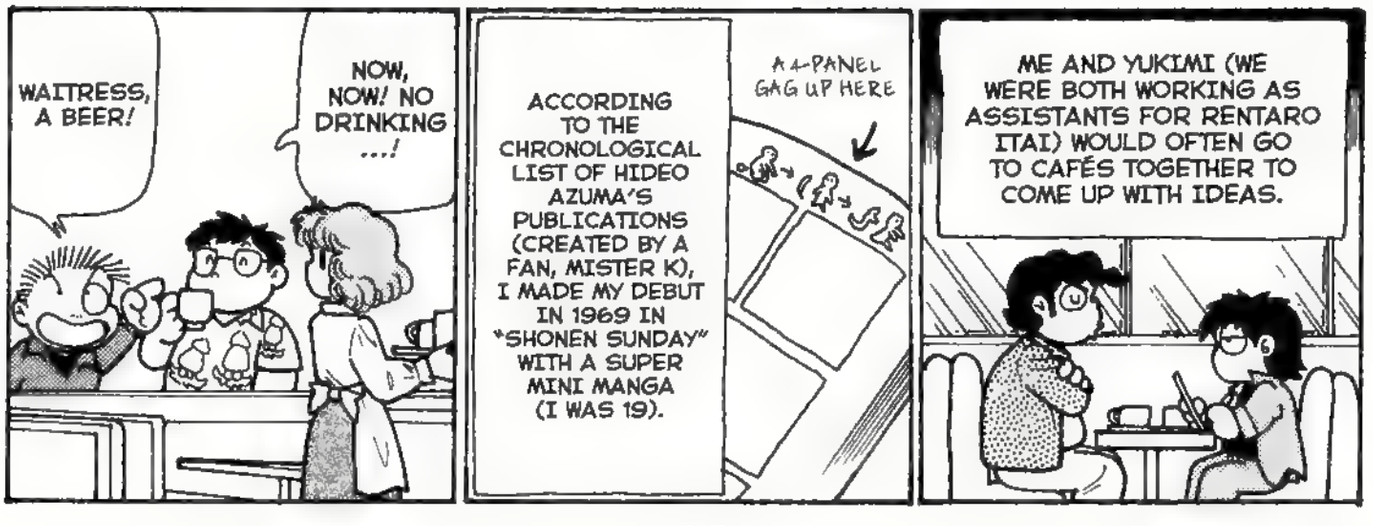
*ABSTINENCE/HOW MY DRINKING HURT OTHERS

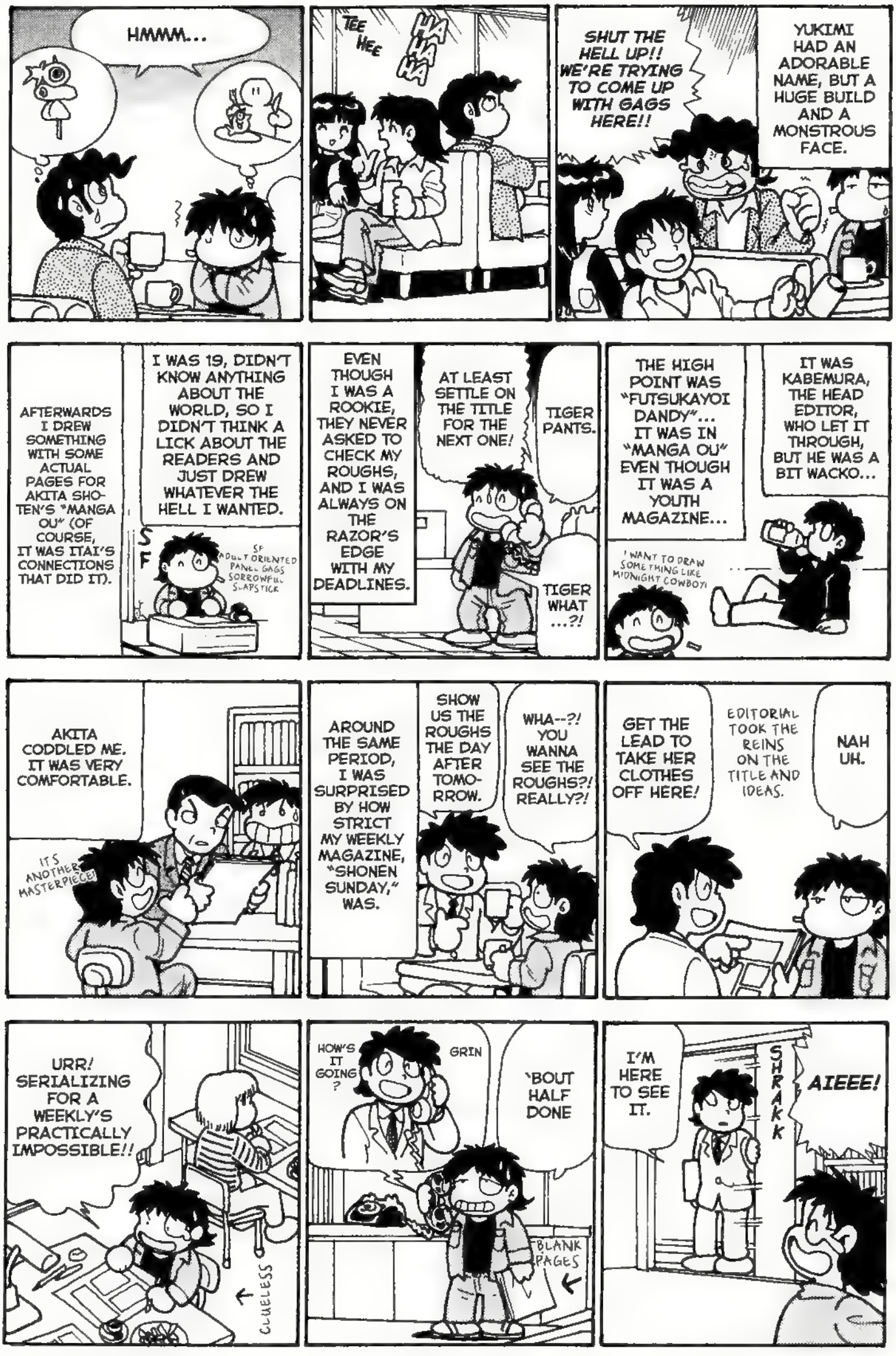
*HUNGOVER DANDY

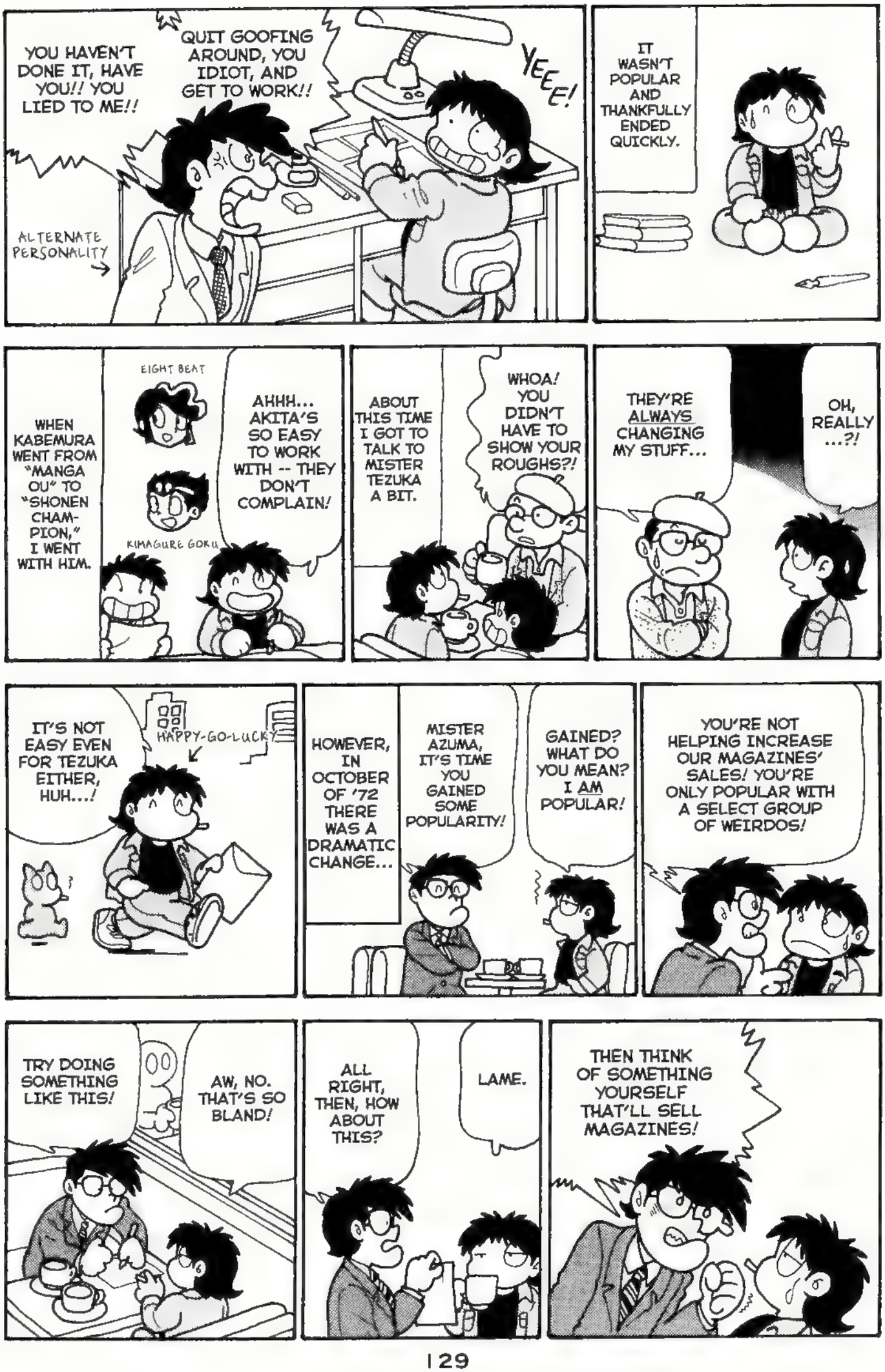
I'D DRINK, PUKE, REPEAT.
I OFTEN GOT TREATED BY MY EDITORS AT AKITA SHOTEN.
WATERED-DOWN WHISKEY DIDN'T AGREE WITH ME, SO I DRANK GIN FIZZ.
GLLP
THE LATE SHONEN CHAMPION HEAD EDITOR MISTER KABEMURA COULD DRINK SAKE IN ONE GULP -- MOST IMPRESSIVE!
I-- INCREDIBLE ...
WEAKLING
HOARRK
AAH! THE CEILING'S SPINNING!
EVER SINCE I WAS IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, I WAS ALWAYS IN AND OUT OF HOSPITALS WITH PSYCHOLOGICALLY INDUCED DUODENAL ULCERS.
IT CLEARED MY ULCERS RIGHT UP!
BOOZE KEEPS YA HEALTHY!
EVEN AFTER BECOMING A MANGA ARTIST, TWO OR THREE TIMES A YEAR I WOULD FALL OVER BLEEDING.
IT GOT SO I WAS DRINKING MORE AND MORE LIQUOR.


TOWN: 12

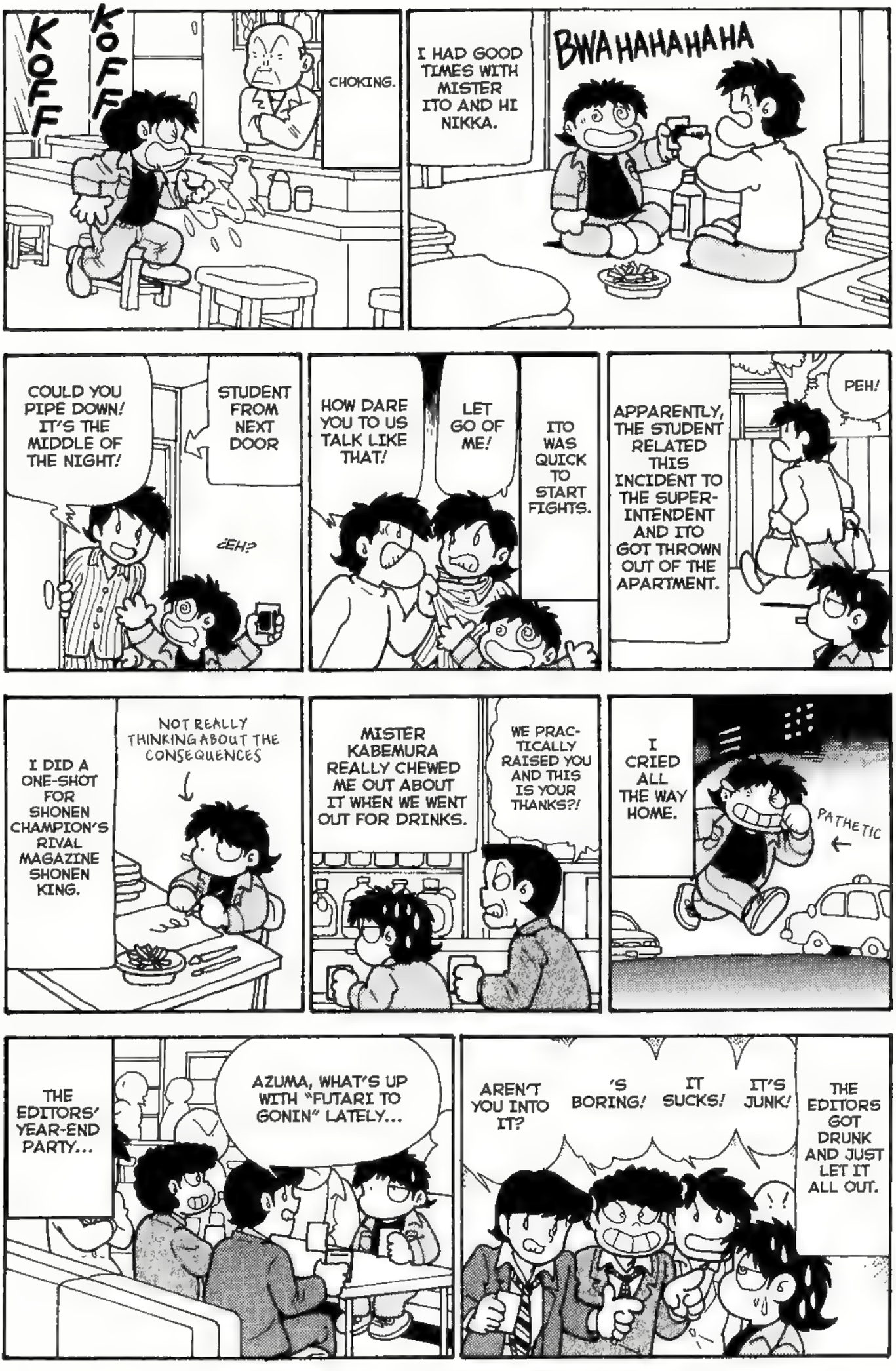

SO THE PIPE FITTING STORIES JUST ENDED OUT OF THE BLUE, HUH. SO WHAT'S NEXT...?
MAYBE THE STUFF ABOUT ALCOHOLISM.
HOW ABOUT LOOKING BACK ON YOUR LIFE AS A MANGA ARTIST INSTEAD? YOU COULD TIE THE ALCOHOL INTO IT.
HUH...? LIKE AN AUTO-BIOGRAPHY? AW, NO WAY!
PLUS THE PAST IS FULL OF THINGS I DON'T WANT TO REMEMBER!
ACK! STOMACH HURTS!

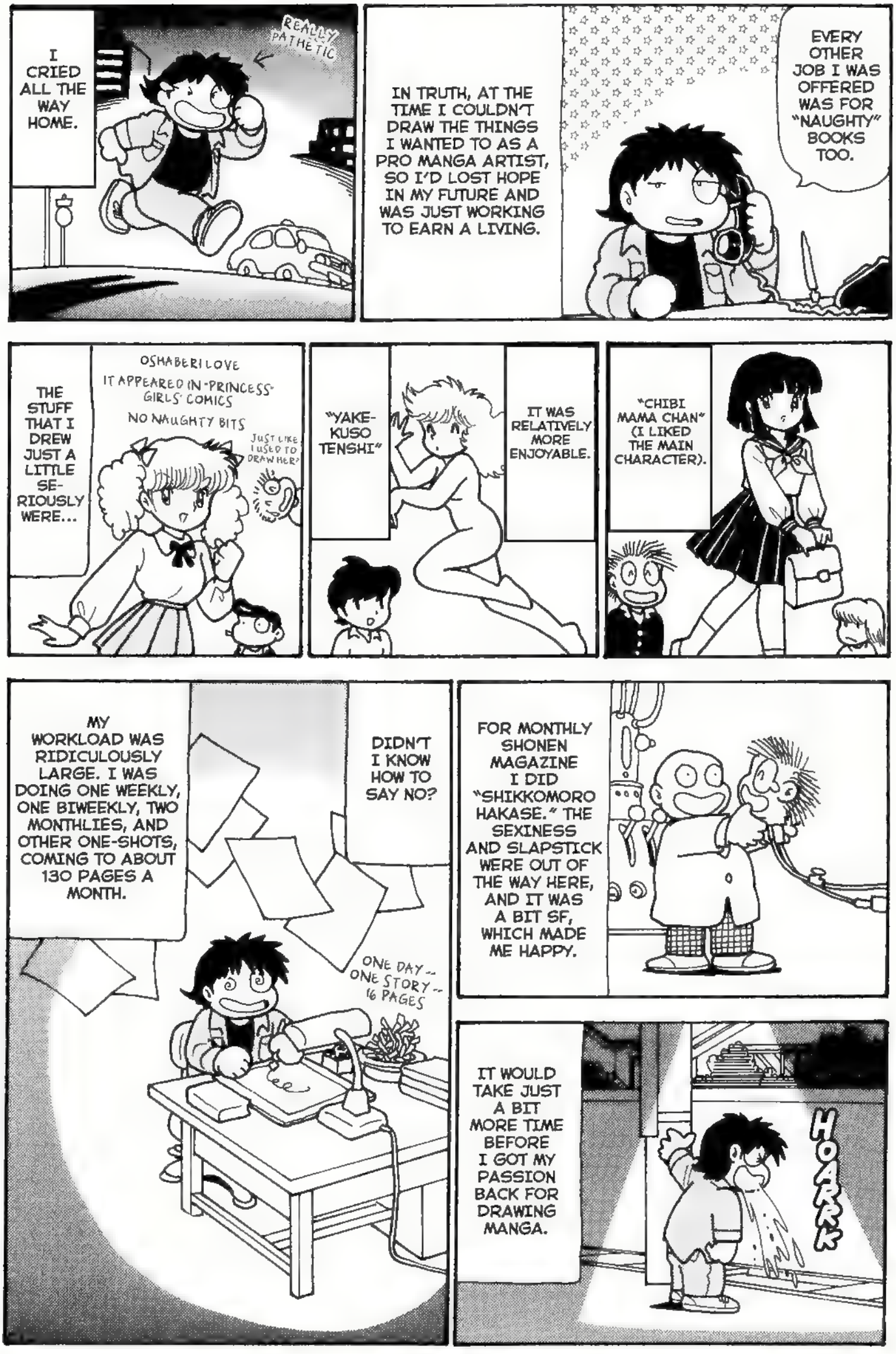

WAITRESS, A BEER!
NOW, NOW! NO DRINKING ...!
ACCORDING TO THE CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF HIDEO AZUMA'S PUBLICATIONS (CREATED BY A FAN, MISTER K), I MADE MY DEBUT IN 1969 IN "SHONEN SUNDAY" WITH A SUPER MINI MANGA (I WAS 19).
A 4-PANEL GAG UP HERE
ME AND YUKIMI (WE WERE BOTH WORKING AS ASSISTANTS FOR RENTARO ITAI) WOULD OFTEN GO TO CAFÉS TOGETHER TO COME UP WITH IDEAS.

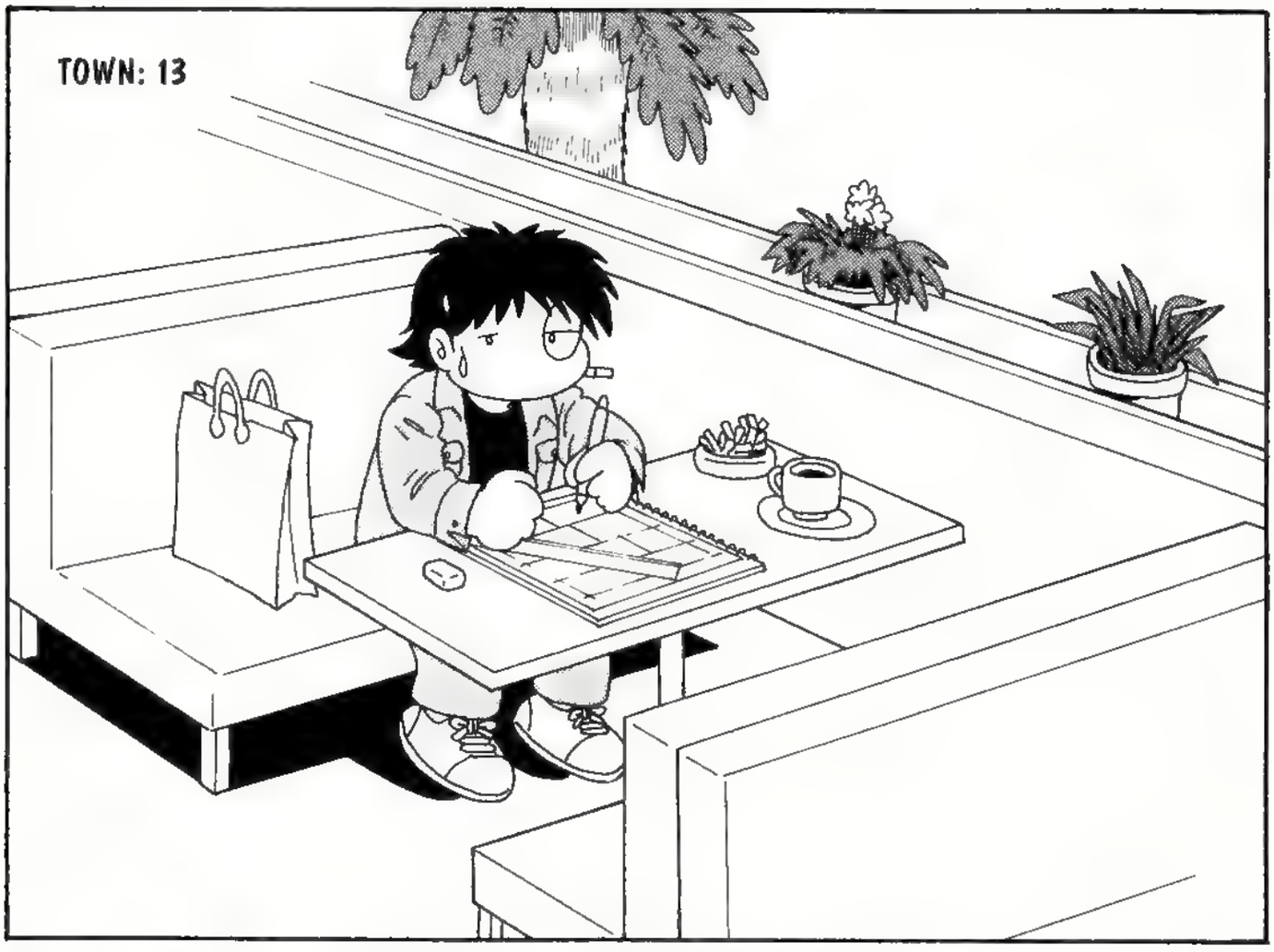

HMMM...
TEE HEE
HA HA HA
SHUT THE HELL UP!! WE'RE TRYING TO COME UP WITH GAGS HERE!!
YUKIMI HAD AN ADORABLE NAME, BUT A HUGE BUILD AND A MONSTROUS FACE.
AFTERWARDS I DREW SOMETHING WITH SOME ACTUAL PAGES FOR AKITA SHOTEN'S "MANGA OU" (OF COURSE, IT WAS ITAI'S CONNECTIONS THAT DID IT).
I WAS 19, DIDN'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE WORLD, SO I DIDN'T THINK A LICK ABOUT THE READERS AND JUST DREW WHATEVER THE HELL I WANTED.
SF
SF ADULT ORIENTED PANEL GAGS SORROWFUL SLAPSTICK
EVEN THOUGH I WAS A ROOKIE, THEY NEVER ASKED TO CHECK MY ROUGHS, AND I WAS ALWAYS ON THE RAZOR'S EDGE WITH MY DEADLINES.
AT LEAST SETTLE ON THE TITLE FOR THE NEXT ONE!
TIGER PANTS.
TIGER WHAT ...?!
THE HIGH POINT WAS "FUTSUKAYOI DANDY"... IT WAS IN "MANGA OU" EVEN THOUGH IT WAS A YOUTH MAGAZINE...
IT WAS KABEMURA, THE HEAD EDITOR, WHO LET IT THROUGH, BUT HE WAS A BIT WACKO...
I WANT TO DRAW SOMETHING LIKE MIDNIGHT COWBOY!
AKITA CODDLED ME. IT WAS VERY COMFORTABLE.
IT'S ANOTHER MASTERPIECE!
AROUND THE SAME PERIOD, I WAS SURPRISED BY HOW STRICT MY WEEKLY MAGAZINE, "SHONEN SUNDAY," WAS.
SHOW US THE ROUGHS THE DAY AFTER TOMORROW.
WHA--?! YOU WANNA SEE THE ROUGHS?! REALLY?!
GET THE LEAD TO TAKE HER CLOTHES OFF HERE!
EDITORIAL TOOK THE REINS ON THE TITLE AND IDEAS.
NAH UH.
URR! SERIALIZING FOR A WEEKLY'S PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE!!
CLUELESS
HOW'S IT GOING?
GRIN
'BOUT HALF DONE
BLANK PAGES
I'M HERE TO SEE IT.
SHRAkk
AIEEE!


YOU HAVEN'T DONE IT, HAVE YOU!! YOU LIED TO ME!!
QUIT GOOFING AROUND, YOU IDIOT, AND GET TO WORK!!
YEEE!
ALTERNATE PERSONALITY
IT WASN'T POPULAR AND THANKFULLY ENDED QUICKLY.
WHEN KABEMURA WENT FROM "MANGA OU" TO "SHONEN CHAMPION," I WENT WITH HIM.
EIGHT BEAT
KIMAGURE GOKU
AHHH... AKITA'S SO EASY TO WORK WITH -- THEY DON'T COMPLAIN!
ABOUT THIS TIME I GOT TO TALK TO MISTER TEZUKA A BIT.
WHOA! YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO SHOW YOUR ROUGHS?!
THEY'RE ALWAYS CHANGING MY STUFF...
OH, REALLY ...?!
IT'S NOT EASY EVEN FOR TEZUKA EITHER, HUH...!
HAPPY-GO-LUCKY
HOWEVER, IN OCTOBER OF '72 THERE WAS A DRAMATIC CHANGE...
MISTER AZUMA, IT'S TIME YOU GAINED SOME POPULARITY!
GAINED? WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I AM POPULAR!
YOU'RE NOT HELPING INCREASE OUR MAGAZINES' SALES! YOU'RE ONLY POPULAR WITH A SELECT GROUP OF WEIRDOS!
TRY DOING SOMETHING LIKE THIS!
AW, NO. THAT'S SO BLAND!
ALL RIGHT, THEN, HOW ABOUT THIS?
LAME.
THEN THINK OF SOMETHING YOURSELF THAT'LL SELL MAGAZINES!

SO WHILE GRUMBLING AND WHINING, I STARTED "FUTARI TO GONIN" BASED ON THE EDITOR'S IDEAS.
LOOKING BACK ON IT, I SHOULDN'T HAVE HAD ANY DOUBTS ABOUT PUTTING IN SEXY SCENES OR NUDITY FOR THE "FAN SERVICE," EVEN IF IT WAS WHAT THE EDITORS WANTED TOO.
AT THE TIME I WOULD HAVE RATHER DIED THAN DO WHAT THE EDITORS SAID.
FROM THE BEGINNING, I JUST TOSS OUT PAGES, SO AS I GO ON THE ART GETS PROPORTIONALLY ROUGHER AND ROUGHER.
EFFORT OUTPUT: ABOUT 20%!
MAYBE I SHOULD REDO THE WHOLE THING...
REPRINTED, BUT HARDLY SOLD... WASN'T MY FAULT THOUGH!
IT WAS THE COMPANY'S!
THE OLDER CHARACTER'S WAY OF USING DIFFICULT WORDS WAS PUT IN ON THE ROUGHS IN SPECIFIC DETAIL BY THE EDITOR...
HMM! IF YOU USE DIALECTIC REASONING ...
BUT HALF WAY THROUGH IT GOT BOTHERSOME, SO HE STARTED SPEAKING NORMALLY.
WHASSUP, OSAMU?
IT'S ALL THE EDITOR'S FAULT!!
AZUMA, YOU'VE GAINED SOME POPULARITY!
WHAT DO I CARE.
I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE CANCELLED QUICK, BUT IN THE END IT RAN FIVE YEARS.
BUT THE TRUTH IS, SHONEN CHAMPION'S SALES WENT UP THANKS TO THE APPEARANCE OF TATSUHIKO YAMAGAMI, TSUBAME KAMOGAWA, AND OTHERS. I WAS A MERE GARNISH.
AS USUAL, I COULDN'T HOLD MY LIQUOR.
A HOT SAKE, PLEASE!
SURE!


KOFF
KOFF
CHOKING.
I HAD GOOD TIMES WITH MISTER ITO AND HI NIKKA.
BWAHAHAHAHA
COULD YOU PIPE DOWN! IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT!
STUDENT FROM NEXT DOOR
EH?
HOW DARE YOU TO US TALK LIKE THAT!
LET GO OF ME!
ITO WAS QUICK TO START FIGHTS.
APPARENTLY, THE STUDENT RELATED THIS INCIDENT TO THE SUPER-INTENDENT AND ITO GOT THROWN OUT OF THE APARTMENT.
PEH!
I DID A ONE-SHOT FOR SHONEN CHAMPION'S RIVAL MAGAZINE SHONEN KING.
NOT REALLY THINKING ABOUT THE CONSEQUENCES
MISTER KABEMURA REALLY CHEWED ME OUT ABOUT IT WHEN WE WENT OUT FOR DRINKS.
WE PRAC-TICALLY RAISED YOU AND THIS IS YOUR THANKS?!
I CRIED ALL THE WAY HOME.
PATHETIC
THE EDITORS' YEAR-END PARTY...
AZUMA, WHAT'S UP WITH "FUTARI TO GONIN" LATELY...
AREN'T YOU INTO IT?
'S BORING!
IT SUCKS!
IT'S JUNK!
THE EDITORS GOT DRUNK AND JUST LET IT ALL OUT.


I CRIED ALL THE WAY HOME.
REALLY PATHETIC
IN TRUTH, AT THE TIME I COULDN'T DRAW THE THINGS I WANTED TO AS A PRO MANGA ARTIST, SO I'D LOST HOPE IN MY FUTURE AND WAS JUST WORKING TO EARN A LIVING.
EVERY OTHER JOB I WAS OFFERED WAS FOR "NAUGHTY" BOOKS TOO.
THE STUFF THAT I DREW JUST A LITTLE SERIOUSLY WERE...
OSHABERI LOVE
IT APPEARED IN "PRINCESS" GIRLS' COMICS
NO NAUGHTY BITS
JUST LIKE I USED TO DRAW HER?
"YAKE-KUSO TENSHI"
IT WAS RELATIVELY MORE ENJOYABLE.
"CHIBI MAMA CHAN" (I LIKED THE MAIN CHARACTER).
MY WORKLOAD WAS RIDICULOUSLY LARGE. I WAS DOING ONE WEEKLY, ONE BIWEEKLY, TWO MONTHLIES, AND OTHER ONE-SHOTS, COMING TO ABOUT 130 PAGES A MONTH.
DIDN'T I KNOW HOW TO SAY NO?
ONE DAY -- ONE STORY -- 16 PAGES
FOR MONTHLY SHONEN MAGAZINE I DID "SHIKKOMORO HAKASE." THE SEXINESS AND SLAPSTICK WERE OUT OF THE WAY HERE, AND IT WAS A BIT SF, WHICH MADE ME HAPPY.
IT WOULD TAKE JUST A BIT MORE TIME BEFORE I GOT MY PASSION BACK FOR DRAWING MANGA.
HOARK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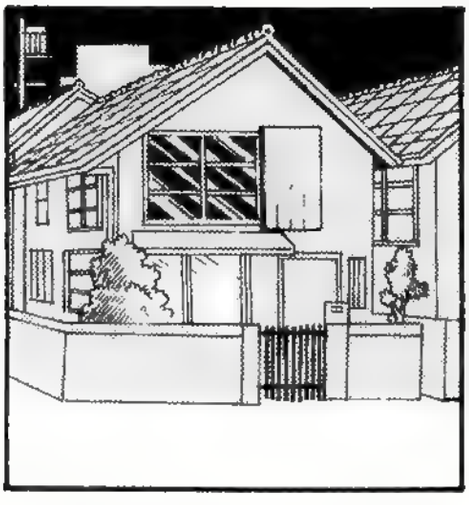
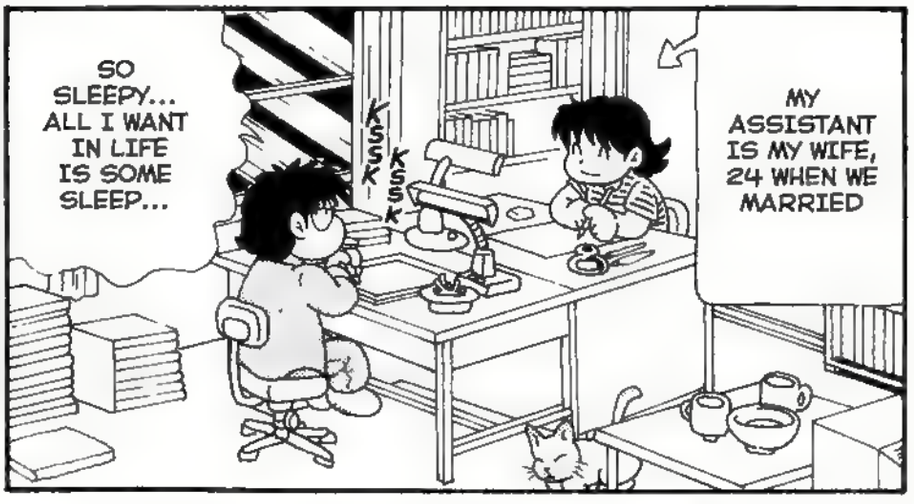



SO SLEEPY... ALL I WANT IN LIFE IS SOME SLEEP...
KSSK KSSK
MY ASSISTANT IS MY WIFE, 24 WHEN WE MARRIED

MUST BE NICE TO BE A CAT. DON'T HAVE TO DRAW MANGA OR ANYTHING!

TV'S OVER FOR THE NIGHT.
WANNA LISTEN TO RECORDS?

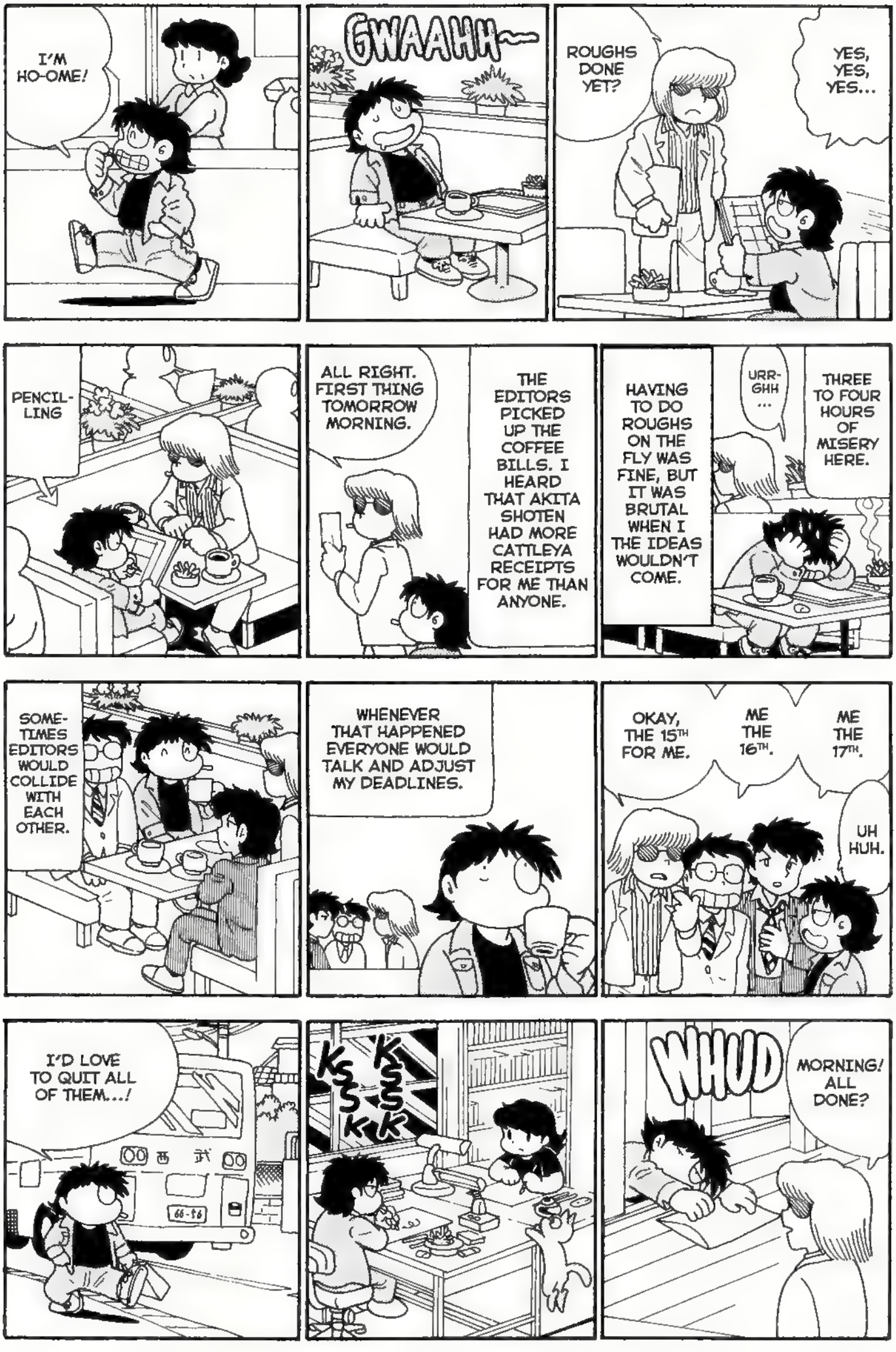
WE PUT ON SHIGERU IZUMIYA, TAKURO, OKABAYASHI, KAGUYA HIME, AND RAKUGO BY ENSHO WHILE I WORKED.
MY WIFE WAS ALSO INTERESTED IN DOJI MORITA.
KSSK KSSK

CHEEP CHEEP CHEEP
THE BACK-GROUNDS ARE GOOD ENOUGH!
YESSS! WE'RE DONE! WE'RE DONE!
THEN AS NOW, I WAS NEVER GOOD WITH BACK-GROUNDS SO WORKING AS SOMEONE ELSE'S ASSISTANT WAS PRACTICALLY IMPOSSIBLE.
I COULDN'T DO THE ASSISTANT'S BASIC FLASH EFFECT EITHER!
ANYPRO COULD TELL YOU HOW BAD THIS IS!
I'M GOING UPSTAIRS TO BED.
SEE YA TOMO-RROW...
GIZAAHH
GET IT DONE, SENSEI?
NEW EDITOR
MY NICKNAME WAS "SENSEI."
URRAAHH...
... AND SIXTEEN. ALL RIGHT. NICE WORK.
GWAAHH
I SLEPT IN THE AFTERNOON.
G--GOTTA DO THE NEXT ROUGHS...
HMM. THIS WEEK AGAIN...!
IT WAS A LETTER THAT POINTED OUT ALL THE VULGARI-TIES IN MY MANGA AND EVEN HAD CLIPPINGS TO ILLUSTRATE.
このコマ
AND ONE FROM THAT OTHER GUY...
IT WAS A STALKER WATCHING ME. IT SAID STUFF LIKE "I'LL BE WAITING AT XX SHRINE."
AW, WHY SHOULD I CARE!
喫茶

*THIS PANEL.

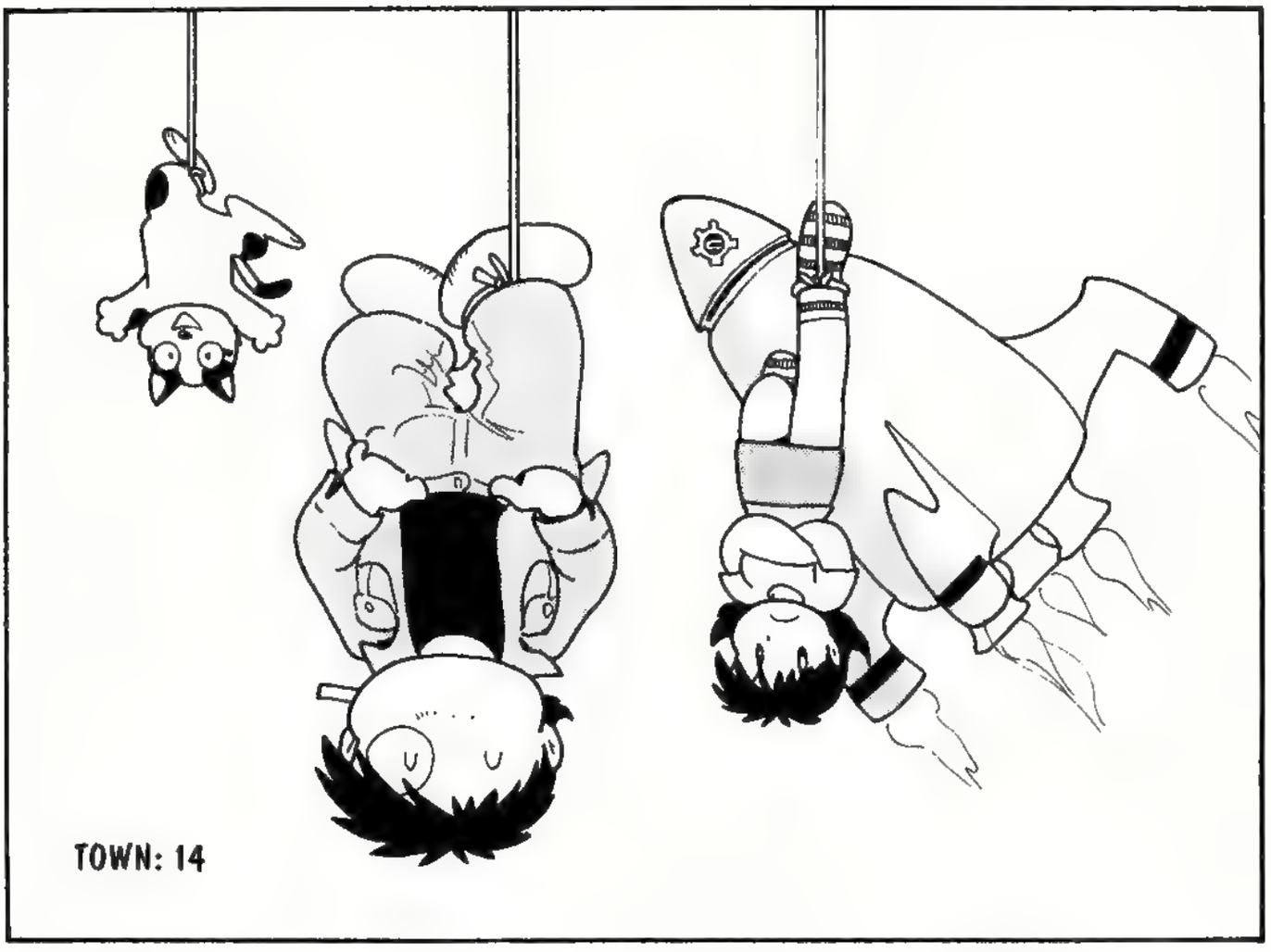
*CAFÉ CATTLEYA

COFFEE AND THE BREAKFAST SPECIAL, PLEASE.
THE COFFEE HERE WAS BAD.
HUH?!
ユベール
THE HEAD WAITRESS HAD HER COFFEE AT ANOTHER PLACE IN THE MORNINGS.
WELL, OUR COFFEE STINKS!
ISN'T THERE SOMETHING ODD ABOUT TODAY'S COFFEE?
DON'T SCARE ME LIKE THAT -- PLEASE!
*SHUBERU
MISTER AZUMA! TELEPHONE!
YES, YES. "PLAY COMIC," RIGHT? I'M DOING IT RIGHT NOW.
MISTER AZUMA! TELEPHONE!
YES, "CHAMPION SPECIAL EDITION," RIGHT? I'M DOING IT NOW.
MISTER AZUMA! TELEPHONE!
TO DO THE ROUGHS, I'D FOCUS MY MIND ON THE BLANK PAGE...
AND THEN JUST BURST INTO IT!
THUD THUD
I'D FIT EVERYTHING EXACTLY ONTO REGULATION SIZE PAGES. I ALMOST NEVER DID CORRECTIONS.
PERFECTO!
I'LL GO GET SOME FOOD!
JUST LEAVE MY STUFF AS IS
THIS CAFÉ WAS BASICALLY MY LIVING ROOM.
HAVING TEMPURA UDON STANDING AT A COUNTER IS THE ONLY WAY!


I'M HO-OME!
GWAAHH~~
ROUGHS DONE YET?
YES, YES, YES...
PENCIL-LING
ALL RIGHT. FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING.
THE EDITORS PICKED UP THE COFFEE BILLS. I HEARD THAT AKITA SHOTEN HAD MORE CATTLEYA RECEIPTS FOR ME THAN ANYONE.
HAVING TO DO ROUGHS ON THE FLY WAS FINE, BUT IT WAS BRUTAL WHEN I THE IDEAS WOULDN'T COME.
URR-GHH ...
THREE TO FOUR HOURS OF MISERY HERE.
SOME-TIMES EDITORS WOULD COLLIDE WITH EACH OTHER.
WHENEVER THAT HAPPENED EVERYONE WOULD TALK AND ADJUST MY DEADLINES.
OKAY, THE 15TH FOR ME.
ME THE 16TH.
ME THE 17TH.
UH HUH.
I'D LOVE TO QUIT ALL OF THEM...!
KSSK KSSK
WHUD
MORNING! ALL DONE?

I CHANGED THE ROUGHS HERE AND HERE.
ALL RIGHT, LEMME USE YOUR PHONE.
UHH, YEAH, LISTENING? "YOUR PXXSY IS--"...
PHONING THE TYPE-SETTER
WE'RE WITH FUTA-BASHA!
WE'RE GOING TO GO WITH YOU ON THE COVER OF OUR NEW MAGAZINE!
PLEASE DRAW IT RIGHT NOW!
NOT QUITE RIGHT... DO IT AGAIN!
HMM... NO! NOT LIKE THAT!
LIKE THIS! LIKE THAT!
WHEN THE MAG CAME OUT IT HAD A TATSUHIKO YAMAGAMI COVER.
HEY!
I RECENTLY READ AN ESSAY BY YAMAGAMI IN WHICH HE SAID HE HAD BEEN CHOSEN TO DO THE COVER FOR THIS "GANGAN YAROU" FROM THE BEGINNING. WHAT THE HELL WERE THOSE GUYS FROM FUTABASHA SMOKING?!
SLIGHTLY BEFORE I STARTED "FUTARI TO GONIN" I SCORED A JOB FOR "TV MAGAZINE" DOING A SERIES BASED ON SCRIPTS BY SHOTARO ISHIMORI.
IT WAS ISHIMORI'S FINE BOOK "BECOMING A MANGA ARTIST" THAT SET ME ON THIS PATH, SO OF COURSE I HAD GREAT RESPECT FOR HIM.
MANGA ARTIST!
MANY OF MY FRIENDS WERE ENTRANCED BY SHINJI NAGASHIMA'S "CRUEL MANGA ARTIST TALES."
THOSE FRIENDS FROM HOKKAIDO CAME DOWN TO TOKYO ABOUT THE SAME TIME I DID -- THE NORTH WIND SIX!
I WROTE ABOUT THESE FRIENDS IN "MUSASHINO-SO NO KORO" AND IT'D TAKE FOREVER, SO I'LL SPARE THE DETAILS.
I'M AJIMA.
WE'RE GOING TO USE MY "SEN NO ME SENSEI" AS A SOURCE.
MAKE THE CHA-RACTERS KIND OF LIKE THIS.
SAY, YOU'RE GOOD!
I'M SUCH AN UTTERLY CRAP ARTIST!
THIS SERIES -- RENAMED "SUKI SUKI MAJOU SENSEI" -- WAS CURSED AND WHEN IT BECAME A TV SERIES THE LEAD ACTRESS DIED IN AN ACCIDENT.

JUST WHEN I THINK I'M DONE AND THE DEADLINES ARE MET...
OH, I WISH I WERE A CA...
ZZZZ
PENCILLING WHILE ASLEEP
ALL DONE, SENSEI?
JUST A BIT LONGER ...
THE BACKGROUNDS LAST TIME WERE KINDA AWFUL, EH?
.....
HEY! THIS PUNCHLINE IS THE SAME AS FROM THE SPECIAL EDITION!
I'D ABSENT-MINDEDLY USED THE SAME GAG WITHOUT EVER PICKING UP ON IT.
.....
WELL... WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT?
WE CAN'T RUN THAT!!
G--GOTTA DO THE ROUGHS...
TEETER
LETTERS FROM THE CLIPPING JERK AND THE STALKER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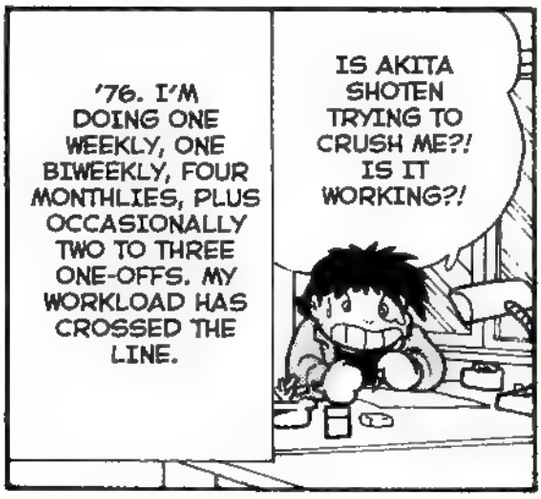
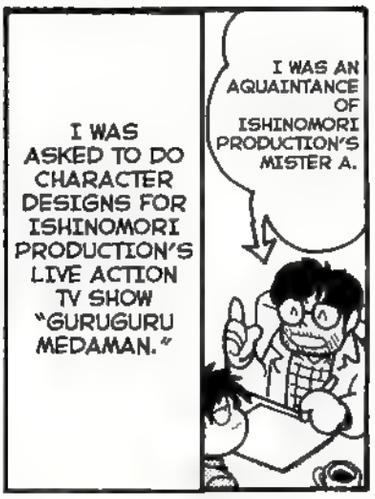
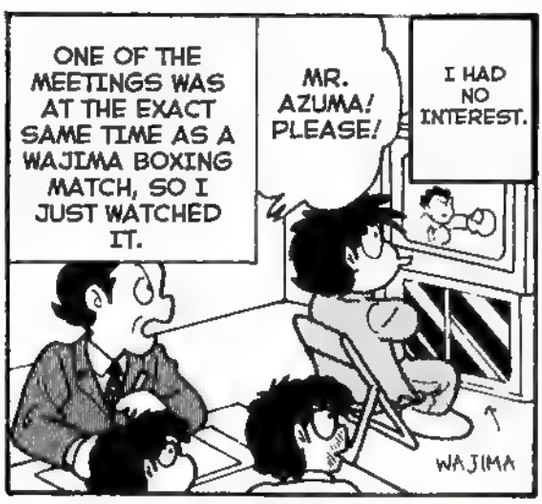
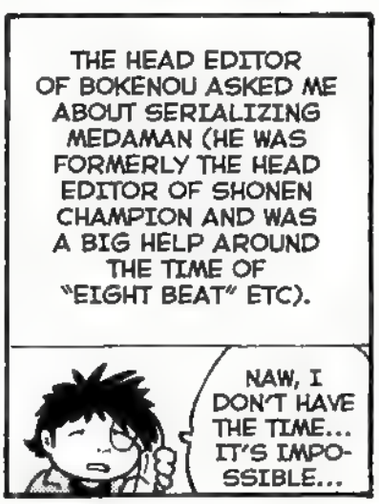

'76. I'M DOING ONE WEEKLY, ONE BIWEEKLY, FOUR MONTHLIES, PLUS OCCASIONALLY TWO TO THREE ONE-OFFS. MY WORKLOAD HAS CROSSED THE LINE.
IS AKITA SHOTEN TRYING TO CRUSH ME?! IS IT WORKING?!

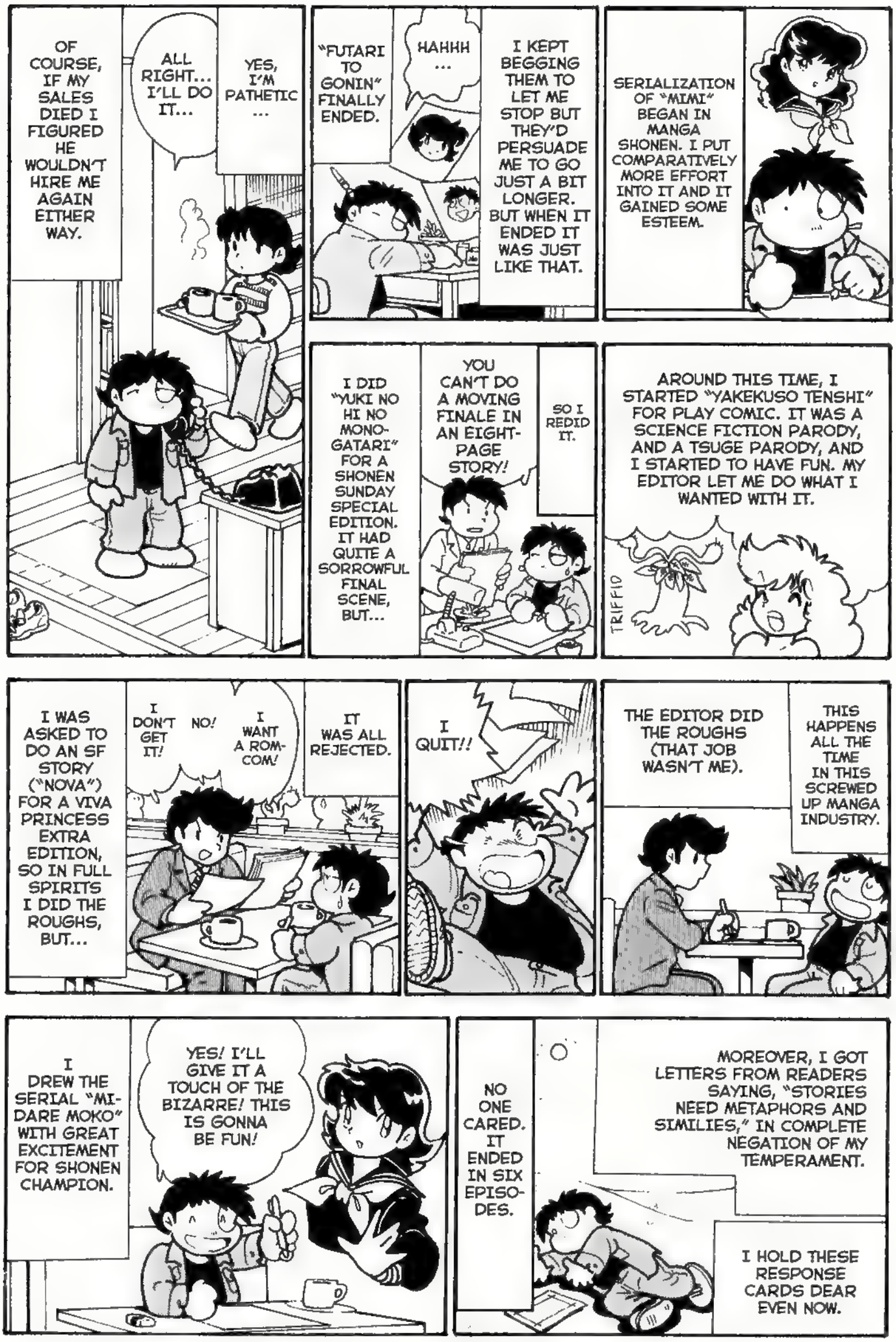
IN ADDITION I BEGAN "NEMUTA-KUN" FOR MONTHLY SHONEN MAGAZINE. LATER ON, I WAS VERY HAPPY TO SEE OSAMU HASHIMOTO TAKE IT UP IN HIS MANGA CRITICISM.


I WAS ASKED TO DO CHARACTER DESIGNS FOR ISHINOMORI PRODUCTION'S LIVE ACTION TV SHOW "GURUGURU MEDAMAN."
I WAS AN AQUAINTANCE OF ISHINOMORI PRODUCTION'S MISTER A.


ONE OF THE MEETINGS WAS AT THE EXACT SAME TIME AS A WAJIMA BOXING MATCH, SO I JUST WATCHED IT.
MR. AZUMA! PLEASE!
I HAD NO INTEREST.
WAJIMA


THE HEAD EDITOR OF BOKENOU ASKED ME ABOUT SERIALIZING MEDAMAN (HE WAS FORMERLY THE HEAD EDITOR OF SHONEN CHAMPION AND WAS A BIG HELP AROUND THE TIME OF "EIGHT BEAT" ETC).
NAW, I DON'T HAVE THE TIME... IT'S IMPO-SSIBLE...

DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME! IF YOU DON'T DO THIS, WHEN YOUR SALES KICK THE BUCKET I'LL NEVER USE YOU AGAIN!!


OF COURSE, IF MY SALES DIED I FIGURED HE WOULDN'T HIRE ME AGAIN EITHER WAY.
ALL RIGHT... I'LL DO IT...
YES, I'M PATHETIC ...
"FUTARI TO GONIN" FINALLY ENDED.
HAHHH ...
I KEPT BEGGING THEM TO LET ME STOP BUT THEY'D PERSUADE ME TO GO JUST A BIT LONGER. BUT WHEN IT ENDED IT WAS JUST LIKE THAT.
SERIALIZATION OF "MIMI" BEGAN IN MANGA SHONEN. I PUT COMPARATIVELY MORE EFFORT INTO IT AND IT GAINED SOME ESTEEM.
I DID "YUKI NO HI NO MONO-GATARI" FOR A SHONEN SUNDAY SPECIAL EDITION. IT HAD QUITE A SORROWFUL FINAL SCENE, BUT...
YOU CAN'T DO A MOVING FINALE IN AN EIGHT-PAGE STORY!
SO I REDID IT.
AROUND THIS TIME, I STARTED "YAKEKUSO TENSHI" FOR PLAY COMIC. IT WAS A SCIENCE FICTION PARODY, AND A TSUGE PARODY, AND I STARTED TO HAVE FUN. MY EDITOR LET ME DO WHAT I WANTED WITH IT.
TRIFFID
I WAS ASKED TO DO AN SF STORY ("NOVA") FOR A VIVA PRINCESS EXTRA EDITION, SO IN FULL SPIRITS I DID THE ROUGHS, BUT...
I DON'T GET IT!
NO!
I WANT A ROM-COM!
IT WAS ALL REJECTED.
I QUIT!!
THE EDITOR DID THE ROUGHS (THAT JOB WASN'T ME).
THIS HAPPENS ALL THE TIME IN THIS SCREWED UP MANGA INDUSTRY.
I DREW THE SERIAL "MI-DARE MOKO" WITH GREAT EXCITEMENT FOR SHONEN CHAMPION.
YES! I'LL GIVE IT A TOUCH OF THE BIZARRE! THIS IS GONNA BE FUN!
NO ONE CARED. IT ENDED IN SIX EPISO-DES.
MOREOVER, I GOT LETTERS FROM READERS SAYING, "STORIES NEED METAPHORS AND SIMILIES," IN COMPLETE NEGATION OF MY TEMPERAMENT.
I HOLD THESE RESPONSE CARDS DEAR EVEN NOW.

'77. I RENTED A WORK SPACE AND GOT TWO ASSISTANTS. MY ART GOT MORE CONSISTENT AND LOST MOST OF ITS ROUGHNESS.
I DROPPED MY SF SERIAL "CHOKKIN" IN SHONEN CHAMPION, AND THOUGHT I SHOULD DO SOMETHING MORE LOW PROFILE. THE ONLY THING I ENJOYED ABOUT THOSE DAYS WAS DRAWING EMI-CHAN (A FEMALE CHARACTER).
I DID ALL SORTS OF EXPERIMENTAL STUFF LIKE THE "PURANKO-KUN" SERIAL FOR COMIC GAG.
TEENY WEENY PANELS
A-HA HAHA!
ONLY I GOT THE JOKE.
INK
I DID A PARODY OF FLOWERS FOR ALGERNON IN "YAKEKUSO TENSHI."
INCIDENTALLY, THE LINE "GIVE ALGERNON HIS DAMN FLOWERS!" BECAME A HOT CATCHPHRASE! (NOT TRUE)
IT WASN'T PLAGIARISM! IT WAS PARODY!
I DID THE ONE-SHOT "NYANNYAKO KUKI-CHAN" FOR A VIVA PRINCESS SPECIAL EDITION. HER NAME WASN'T CREDITED, BUT IT WAS MY WIFE'S SCRIPT.
GIMME THOSE IDEAS!
FORCING A WOMAN TO HAND OVER MATERIAL IS A BIT DAZAI-ISH, ISN'T IT? NO?
'78. "TABAKO OBAKE DA YO" SERIALIZED IN "KO 2 COURSE." I LIKED THE CHARACTERS BUT...
UHH... I CAN'T THINK UP ANY MATERIAL FOR THIS EPISODE OF "TABAKO OBAKE," MY ASSISTANTS...
SO YOU COME UP WITH IT! IF I USE IT, YOU'LL GET 500 YEN!
HOW ABOUT THIS?
REJECT!
HERE!
HERE!
GOOD! I'LL USE IT! THAT'S 500 YEN!

FOR "KO 1 COURSE" I SERIALIZED "PARALLEL KYOUSHITSU." COMING UP WITH IDEAS WAS INCREDIBLY PAINFUL.

I USED A WHOLE NOTEBOOK FOR ROUGHS FOR ONE STORY.

BUT AT FIRST I WAS DOING IT REALLY SF-LIKE, SO I WAS SATISFIED.

WHEN IT CAME OUT IN BOOK FORM, I WAS MOVED BY SHINICHI HOSHI INCLUDING IT IN HIS BEST FIVE LIST.

LITTLE BY LITTLE I WAS GETTING MY PASSION BACK FOR DRAWING MANGA. MAYBE I WAS ENCOURAGED BY YOSUKE YAMASHITA SAYING "THOSE WHO DON'T DO WHAT THEY LIKE HAVE CONTORTED FACES," AND AMATEUR ARTISTS WORKING IN FANZINES WHO COULD DRAW WHAT THEY WANTED...

THESE GODDAMN LAYMEN (APOLOGIES) GET TO DRAW WHATEVER THEY LIKE!

IF I CAN'T DRAW WHAT I LIKE THEN I'LL QUIT!!

AFTER "CHOKKIN" ENDED, I SPLIT WITH AKITA SHOTEN.

WELL, SEE YA. HAHAHA!

USE ME AND DUMP ME, EH?!

KABEMURA

YAMAGAMI AND KAMOGAWA WERE SELLING LOADS OF CHAMPIONS FOR THEM, SO WHAT DID THEY CARE?

I THOUGHT I'D NEVER WORK WITH KABEMURA AGAIN, BUT ONCE IN A WHILE...

I NEED A FILL-IN FOR TEZUKA FIRST THING TOMORROW MORNING!

SURE!

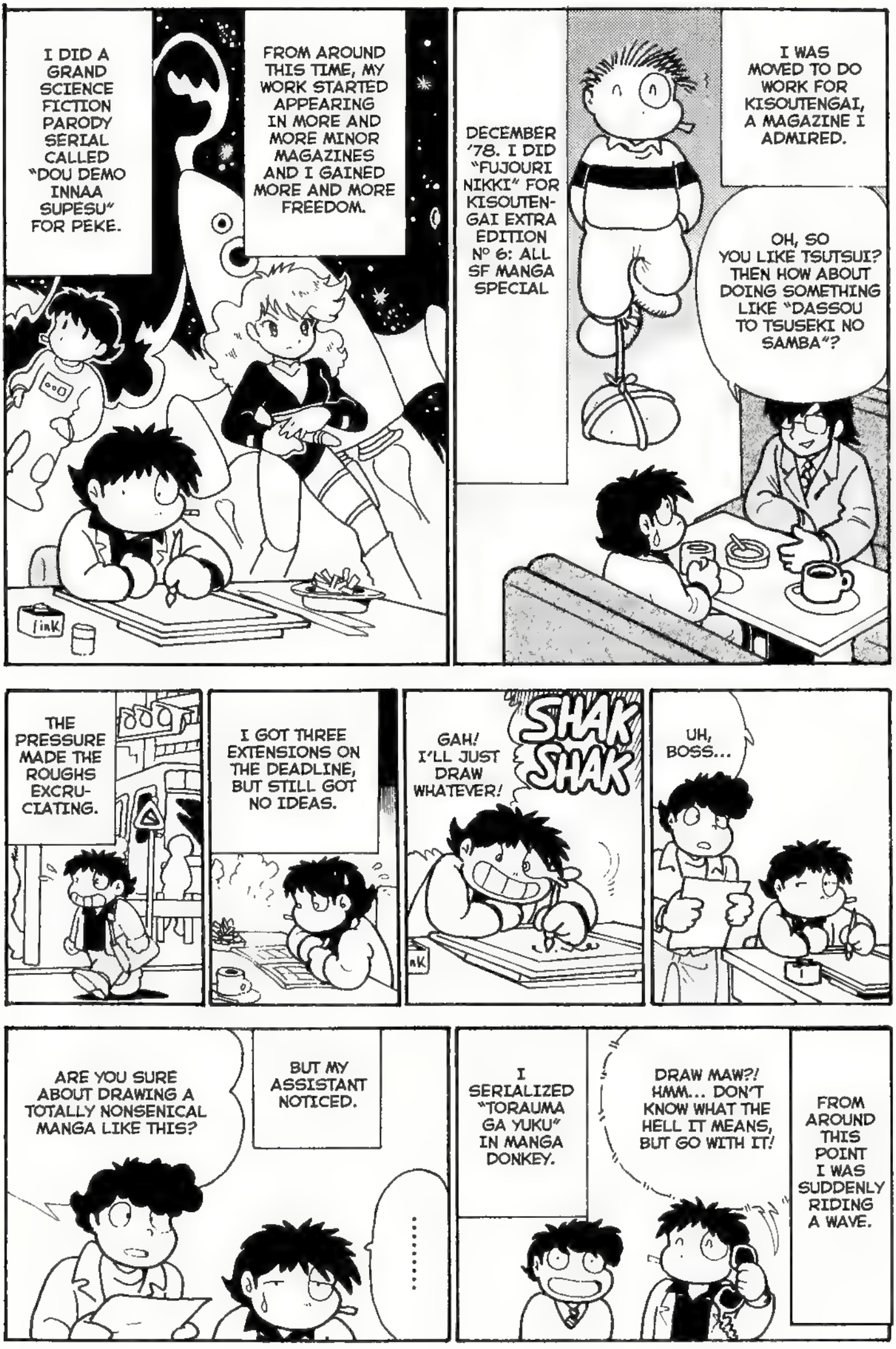
BEING A FILL-IN FOR TEZUKA MADE ME HAPPY FOR SOME REASON.

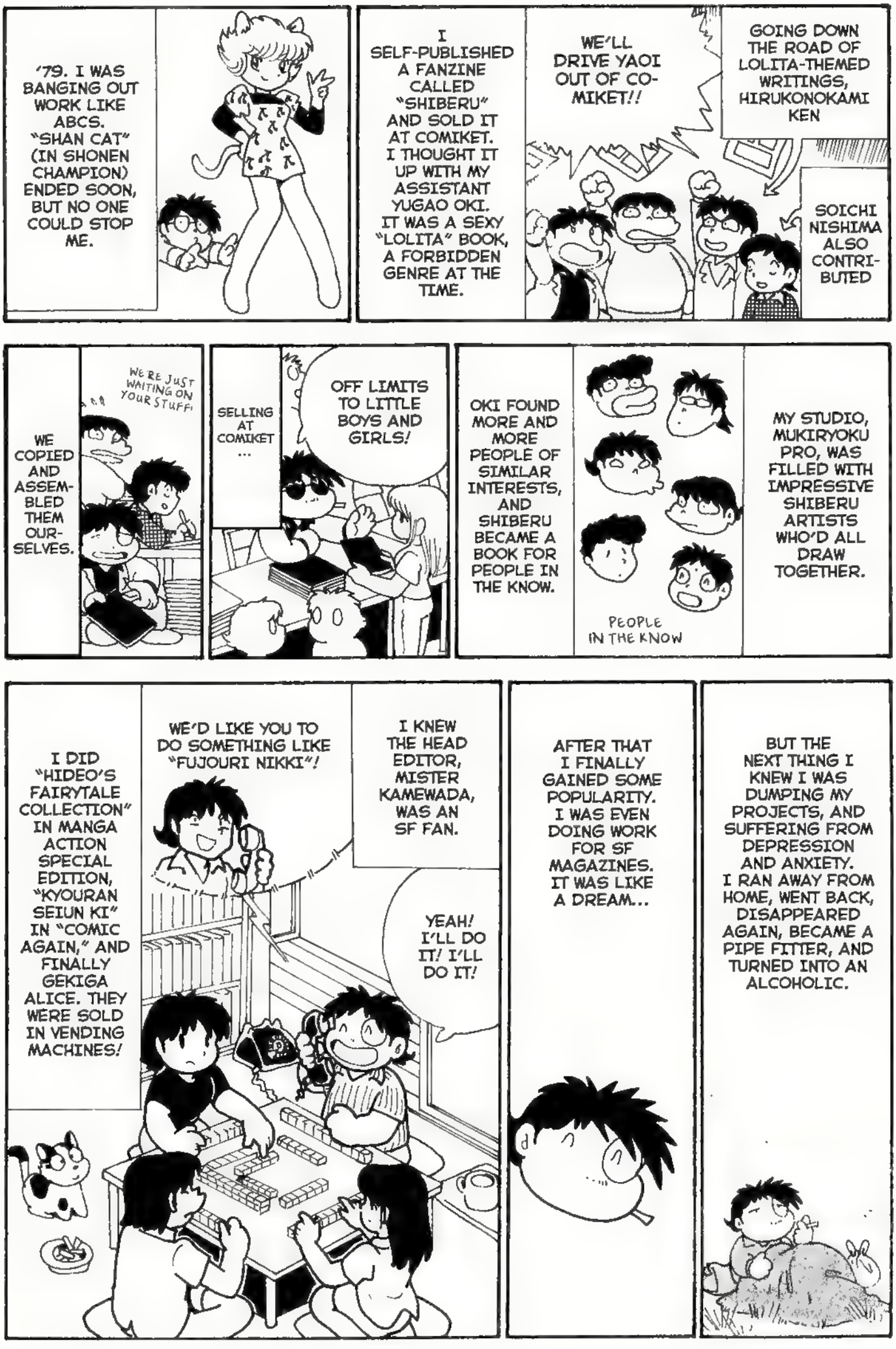
I SERIALIZED "YAKIDORI-KUN" IN MONTHLY SHONEN CHAMPION

I GOT SOME HARDCORE FANS FOR THE GIRLISH WIFE (?) CHARACTER.

AUGUST '78. "OUT" MAGAZINE WAS PUTTING OUT A SPECIAL "THE MELLOW WORLD OF HIDEO AZUMA" EDITION. I WAS GRATEFUL.

MR. X, THE EDITOR I MET AT THIS TIME, WOULD SHOW UP AGAIN LATER WHILE I WAS WORKING ON OTHER PROJECTS THAT YOU COULD SAY WERE TURNING POINTS FOR ME. HE BROUGHT GOOD LUCK WITH HIM.


I DID A GRAND SCIENCE FICTION PARODY SERIAL CALLED "DOU DEMO INNAA SUPESU" FOR PEKE.
FROM AROUND THIS TIME, MY WORK STARTED APPEARING IN MORE AND MORE MINOR MAGAZINES AND I GAINED MORE AND MORE FREEDOM.
DECEMBER '78. I DID "FUJOURI NIKKI" FOR KISOUTEN-GAI EXTRA EDITION Nº 6: ALL SF MANGA SPECIAL
I WAS MOVED TO DO WORK FOR KISOUTENGAI, A MAGAZINE I ADMIRED.
OH, SO YOU LIKE TSUTSUI? THEN HOW ABOUT DOING SOMETHING LIKE "DASSOU TO TSUSEKI NO SAMBA"?
THE PRESSURE MADE THE ROUGHS EXCRU-CIATING.
I GOT THREE EXTENSIONS ON THE DEADLINE, BUT STILL GOT NO IDEAS.
GAH! I'LL JUST DRAW WHATEVER!
SHAK SHAK
UH, BOSS...
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT DRAWING A TOTALLY NONSENICAL MANGA LIKE THIS?
BUT MY ASSISTANT NOTICED.
.....
I SERIALIZED "TORAUMA GA YUKU" IN MANGA DONKEY.
DRAW MAW?! HMM... DON'T KNOW WHAT THE HELL IT MEANS, BUT GO WITH IT!
FROM AROUND THIS POINT I WAS SUDDENLY RIDING A WAVE.


'79. I WAS BANGING OUT WORK LIKE ABCS. "SHAN CAT" (IN SHONEN CHAMPION) ENDED SOON, BUT NO ONE COULD STOP ME.
I SELF-PUBLISHED A FANZINE CALLED "SHIBERU" AND SOLD IT AT COMIKET. I THOUGHT IT UP WITH MY ASSISTANT YUGAO OKI. IT WAS A SEXY "LOLITA" BOOK, A FORBIDDEN GENRE AT THE TIME.
WE'LL DRIVE YAOI OUT OF CO-MIKET!!
GOING DOWN THE ROAD OF LOLITA-THEMED WRITINGS, HIRUKONOKAMI KEN
SOICHI NISHIMA ALSO CONTRI-BUTED
WE COPIED AND ASSEM-BLED THEM OUR-SELVES.
WE'RE JUST WAITING ON YOUR STUFF!
SELLING AT COMIKET ...
OFF LIMITS TO LITTLE BOYS AND GIRLS!
OKI FOUND MORE AND MORE PEOPLE OF SIMILAR INTERESTS, AND SHIBERU BECAME A BOOK FOR PEOPLE IN THE KNOW.
PEOPLE IN THE KNOW
MY STUDIO, MUKIRYOKU PRO, WAS FILLED WITH IMPRESSIVE SHIBERU ARTISTS WHO'D ALL DRAW TOGETHER.
I DID "HIDEO'S FAIRYTALE COLLECTION" IN MANGA ACTION SPECIAL EDITION, "KYOURAN SEIUN KI" IN "COMIC AGAIN," AND FINALLY GEKIGA ALICE. THEY WERE SOLD IN VENDING MACHINES!
WE'D LIKE YOU TO DO SOMETHING LIKE "FUJOURI NIKKI"!
I KNEW THE HEAD EDITOR, MISTER KAMEWADA, WAS AN SF FAN.
YEAH! I'LL DO IT! I'LL DO IT!
AFTER THAT I FINALLY GAINED SOME POPULARITY. I WAS EVEN DOING WORK FOR SF MAGAZINES. IT WAS LIKE A DREAM...
BUT THE NEXT THING I KNEW I WAS DUMPING MY PROJECTS, AND SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY. I RAN AWAY FROM HOME, WENT BACK, DISAPPEARED AGAIN, BECAME A PIPE FITTER, AND TURNED INTO AN ALCOHOLIC.

ALCOHOLIC
WARD

147
ALCOHOLIC DAYS: 1

153
ALCOHOLIC DAYS: 2

159
ALCOHOLIC DAYS: 3

165
THE WARD: 1

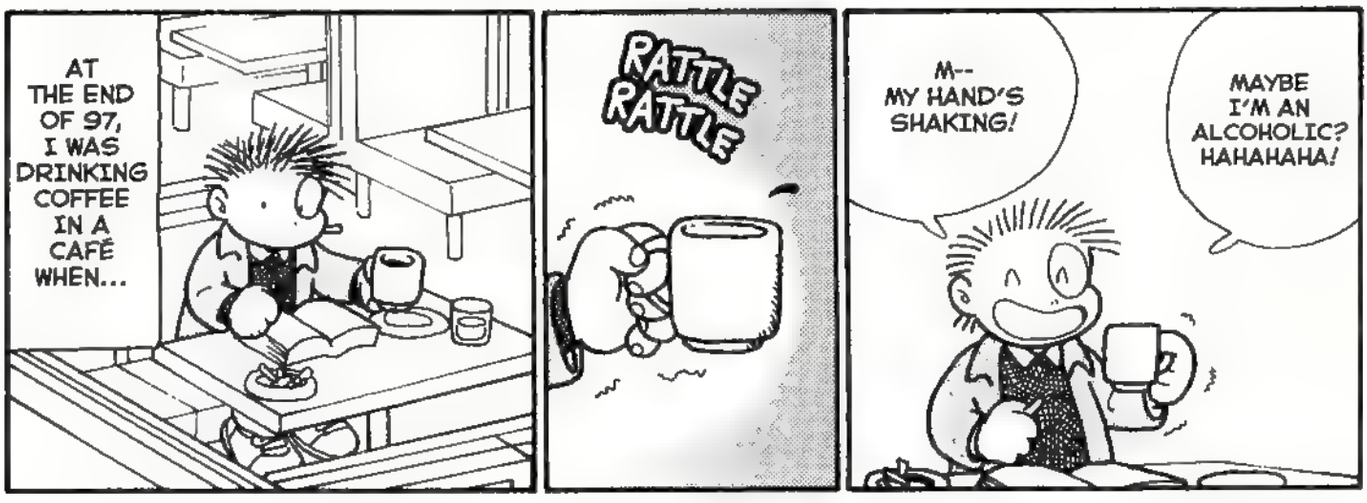
171
THE WARD: 2

177
THE WARD: 3

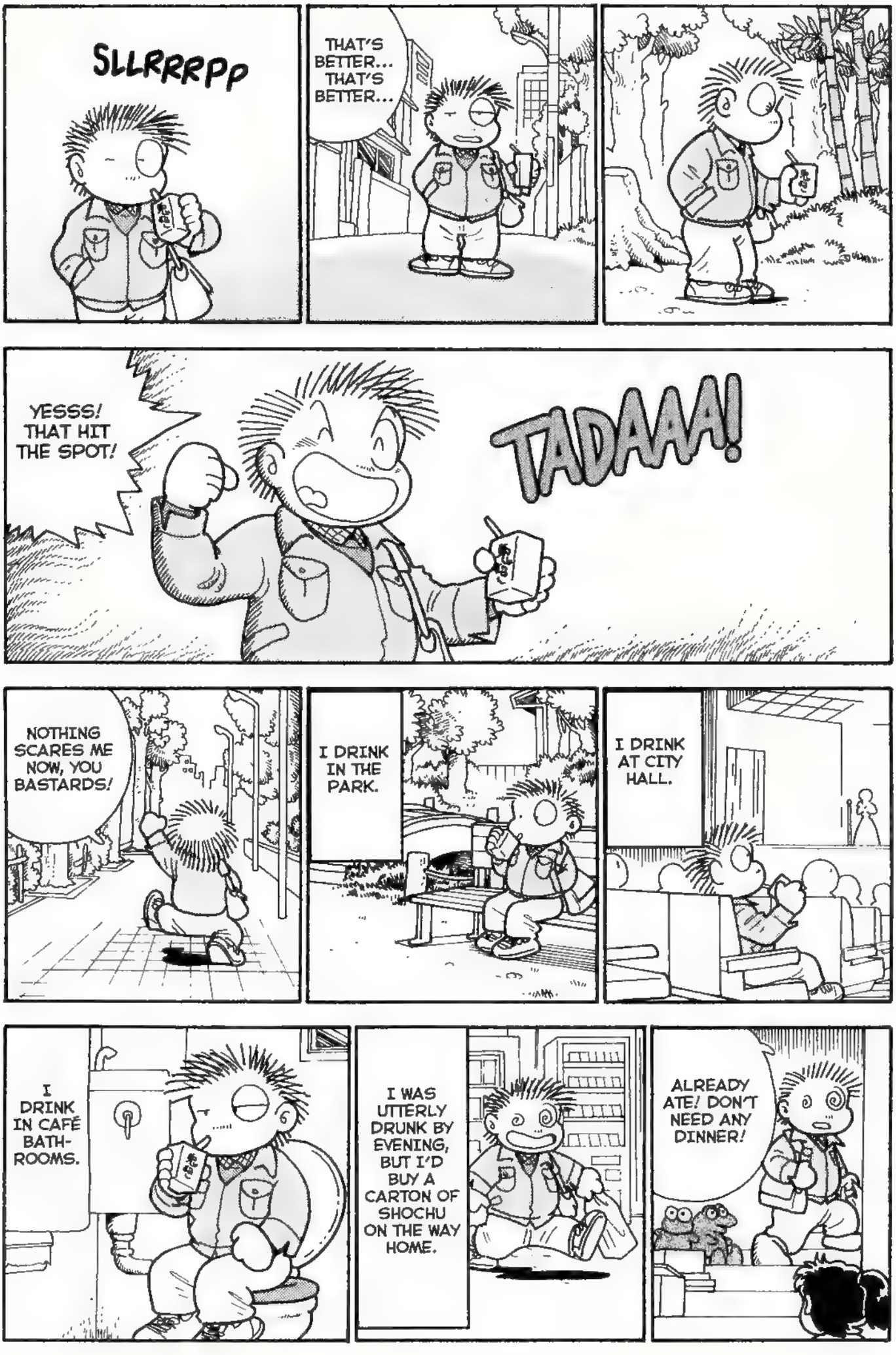
183
THE WARD: 4

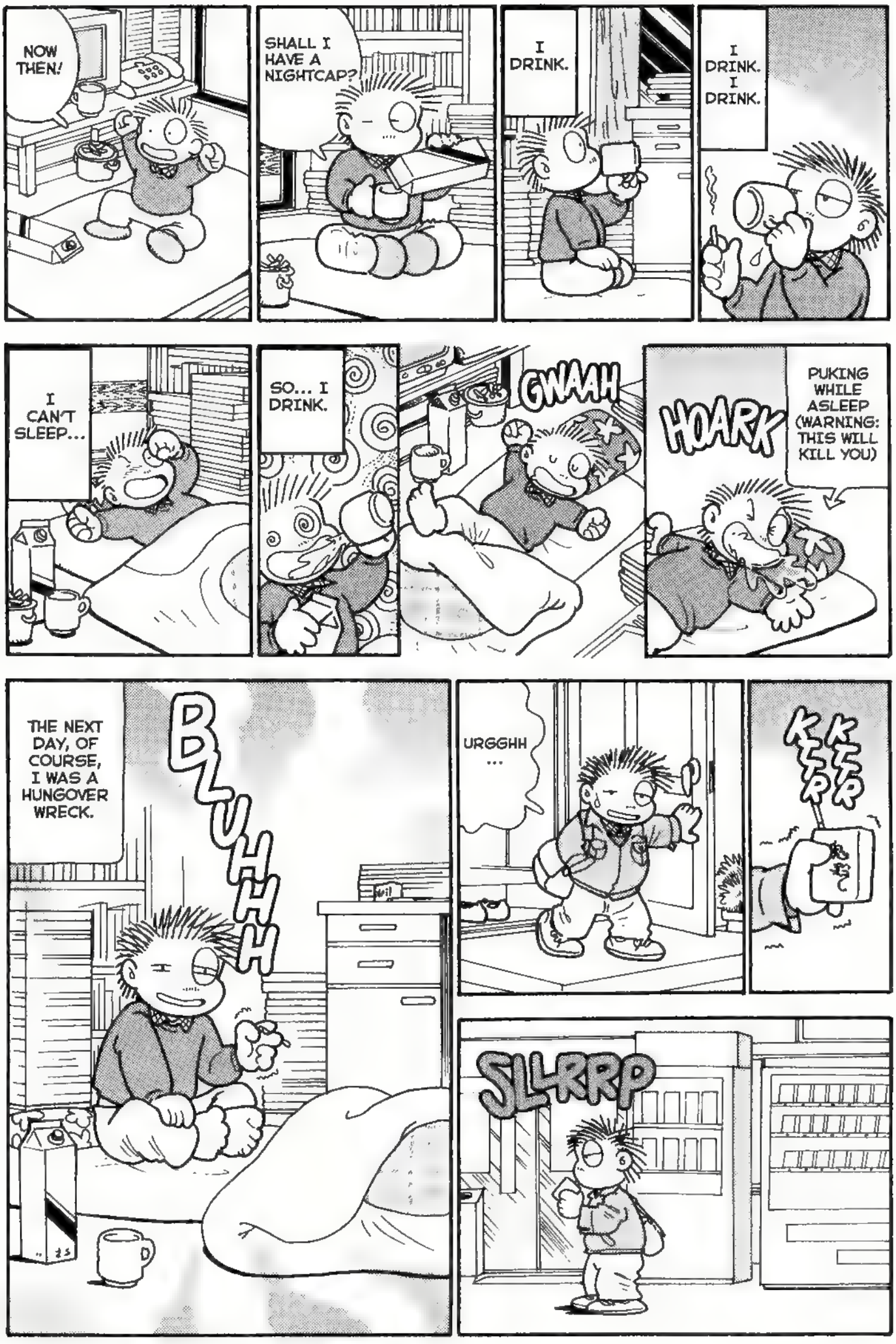
189
THE WARD: 5

ALCOHOLIC
DAYS: 1


AT THE END OF 97, I WAS DRINKING COFFEE IN A CAFÉ WHEN...
RATTLE RATTLE
M-- MY HAND'S SHAKING!
MAYBE I'M AN ALCOHOLIC? HAHAHAHA!

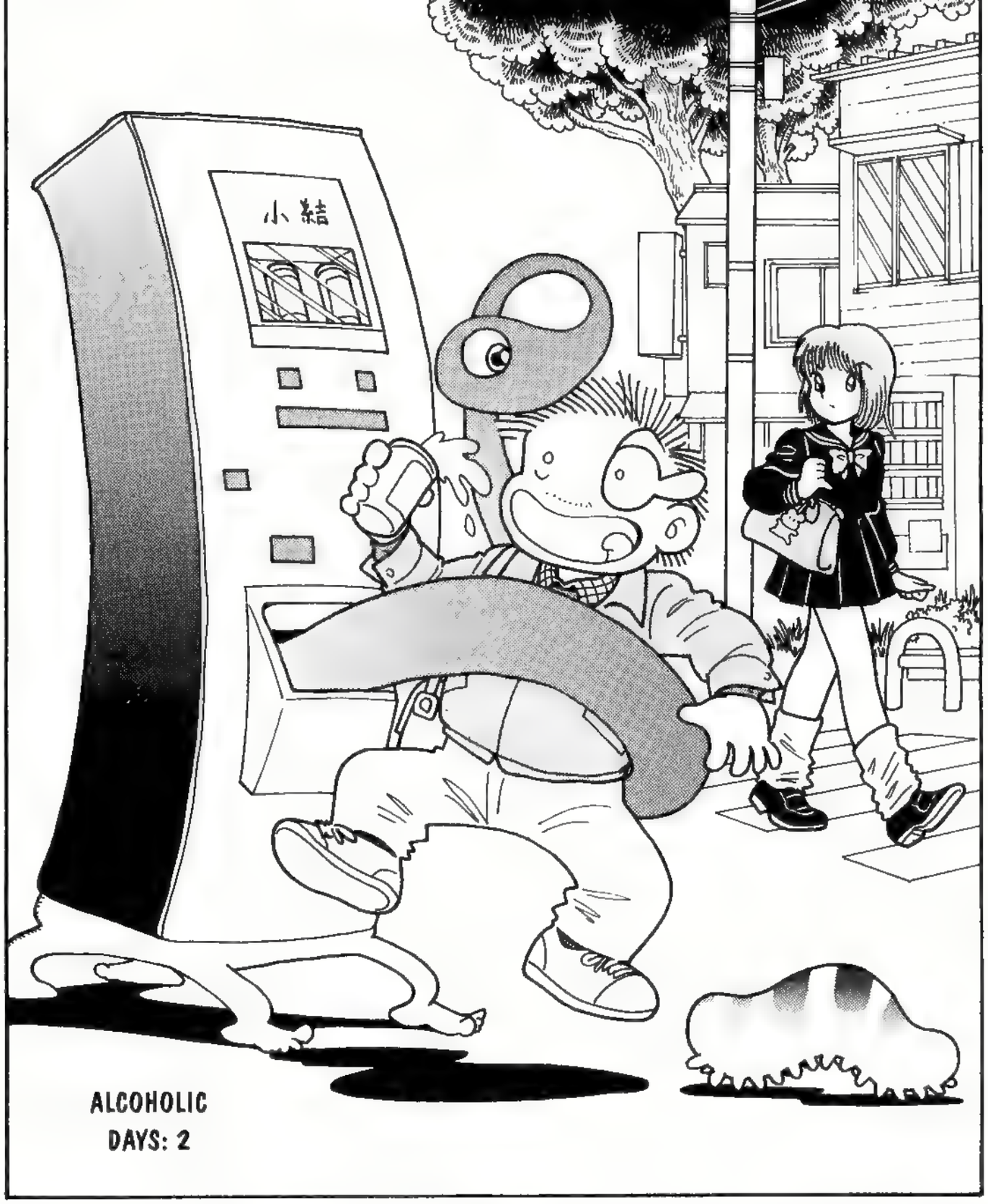
BUT THIS WASN'T JUST IDLE TALK. BY THE SPRING OF '98 I WAS IN A STATE OF NON-STOP DRINKING. (A TYPICAL ALCOHOLIC CONDITION OF DRINKING AT ALL TIMES EXCEPT WHEN SLEEPING.)
AROUND THIS TIME, EVERY DAY...
I'D WAKE UP IN THE AFTERNOON, HUNGOVER OF COURSE.
URRR... I FEEL SICK... HEADACHE...
GOTTA HAVE A DRINK!
*UMAGOROSHI SAKE
MY STOMACH WOULD BARELY TAKE ANY COFFEE OR FOOD.
GOING OUT TO DO SOME ROUGHS.
I'D RUSH TO A NEARBY CONVE-NIENCE STORE...
Ly Mart
AND BUY A FIVE-PACK OF 100-YEN SAKE.
I WAS EMBA-RASSED FOR MY HANDS TO BE SEEN SHAKING ...
SO I PAID SUPER FAST.
THANK Y--
SWISH
PTCH

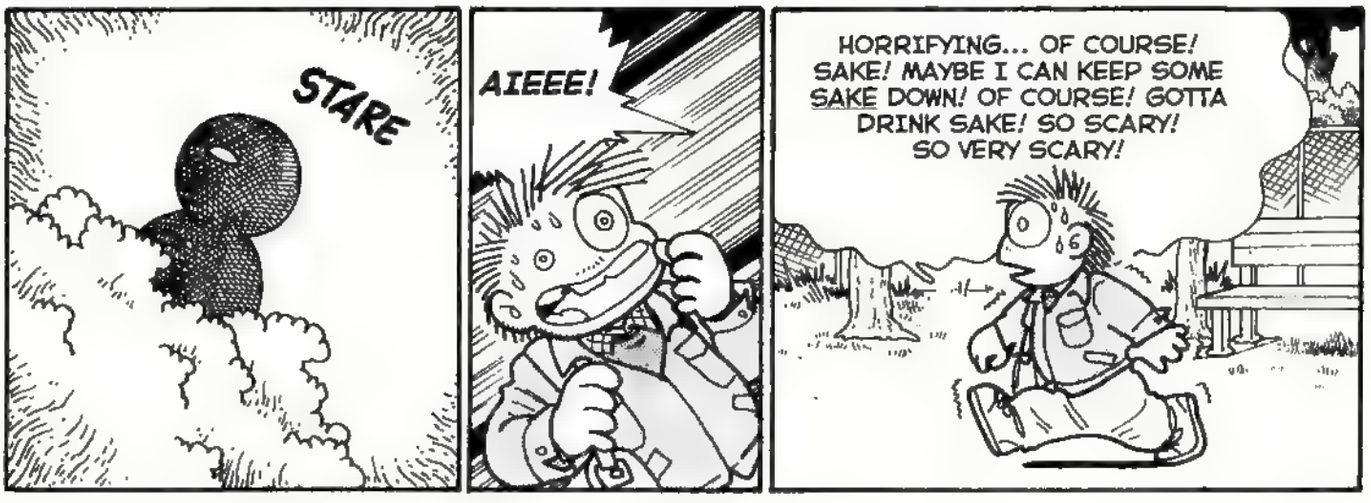

SLLRRRPP
THAT'S BETTER... THAT'S BETTER...
YESSS! THAT HIT THE SPOT!
TADAAA!
NOTHING SCARES ME NOW, YOU BASTARDS!
I DRINK IN THE PARK.
I DRINK AT CITY HALL.
I DRINK IN CAFÉ BATH-ROOMS.
I WAS UTTERLY DRUNK BY EVENING, BUT I'D BUY A CARTON OF SHOCHU ON THE WAY HOME.
ALREADY ATE! DON'T NEED ANY DINNER!

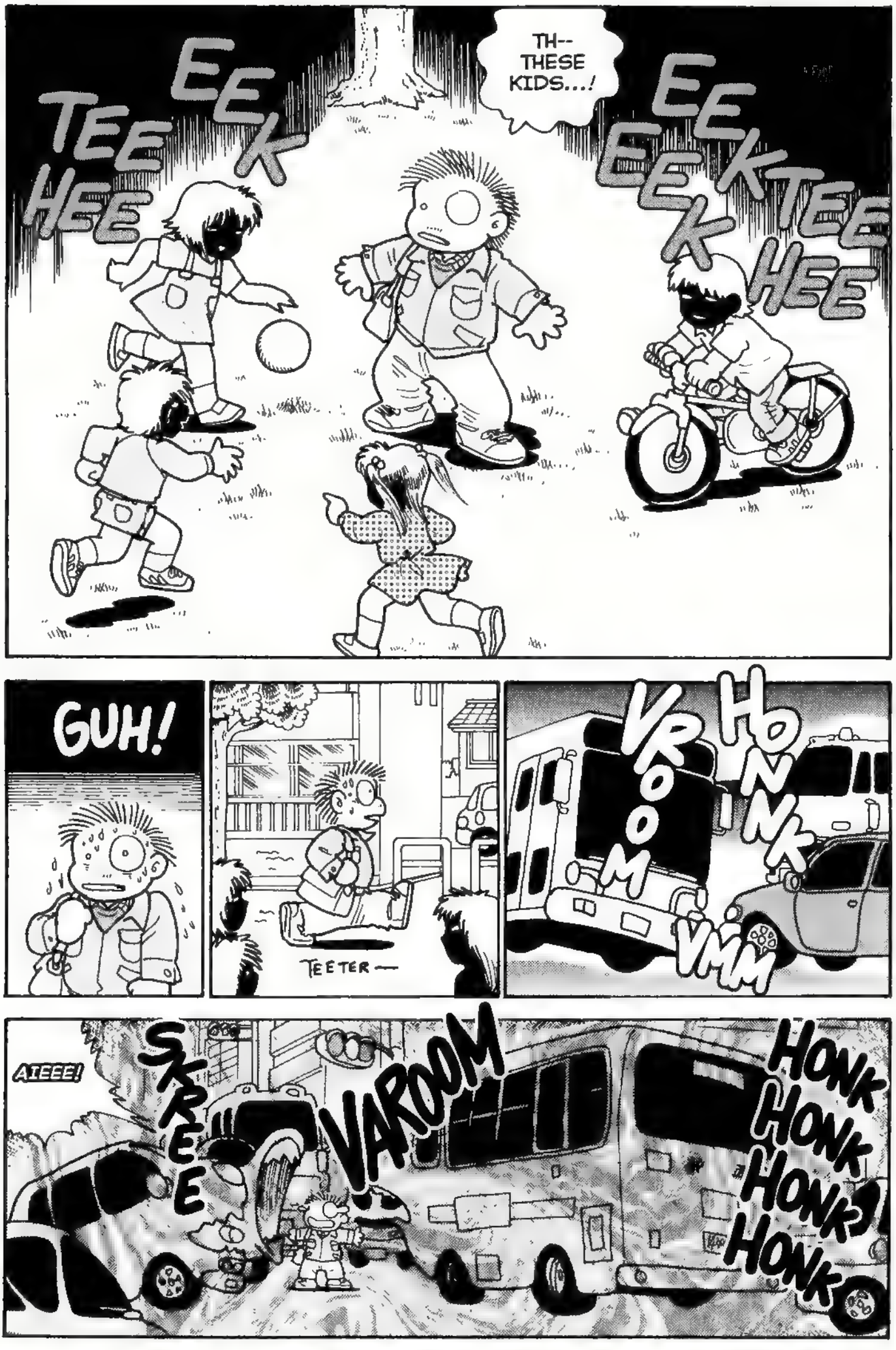

NOW THEN!
SHALL I HAVE A NIGHTCAP?
I DRINK.
I DRINK. I DRINK.
I CAN'T SLEEP...
SO... I DRINK.
GWAAH
HOARK
PUKING WHILE ASLEEP (WARNING: THIS WILL KILL YOU)
THE NEXT DAY, OF COURSE, I WAS A HUNGOVER WRECK.
BLUHHH
URGGHH ...
KTR KTR
SLRRP

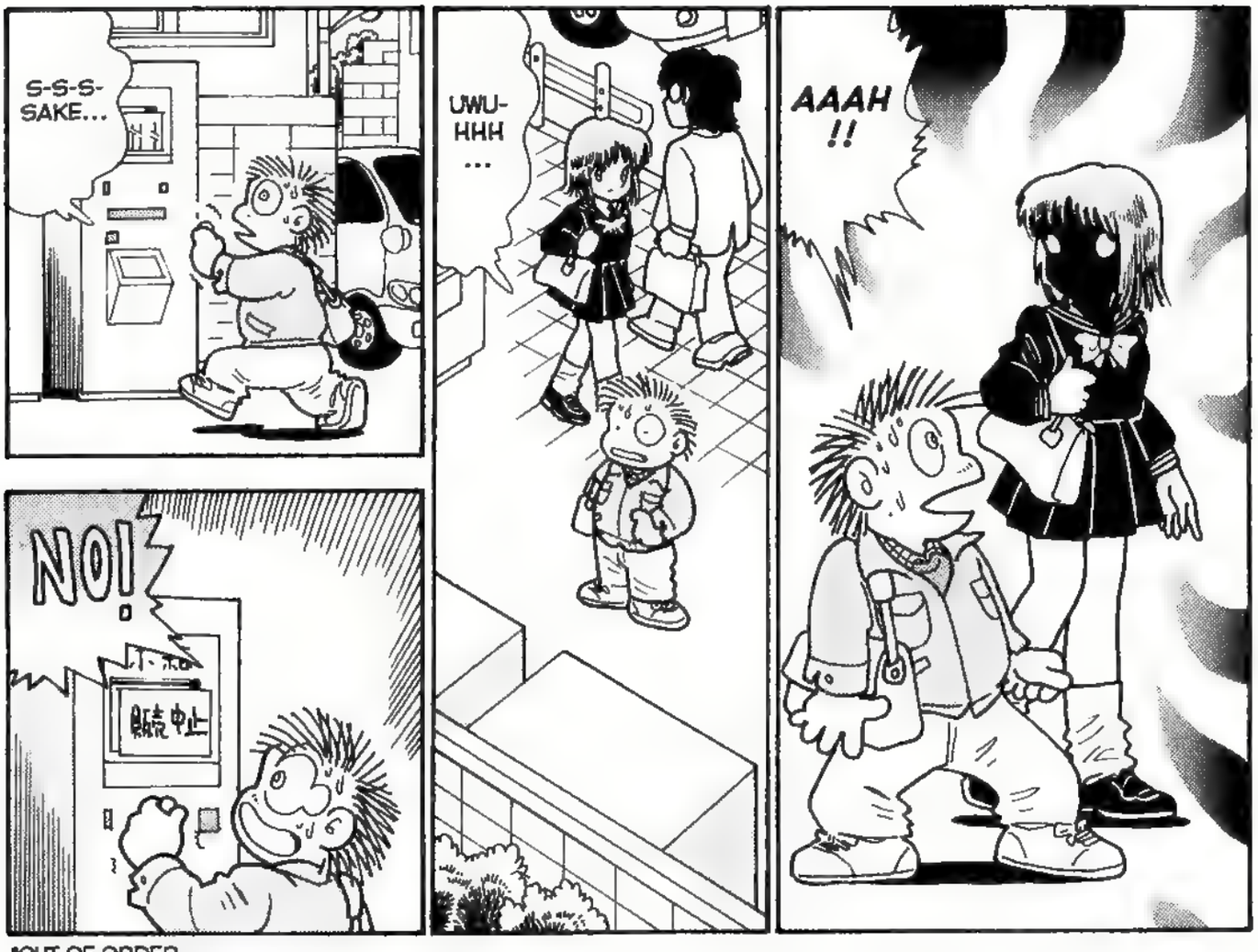
.....
HOARK
HAHH
HAHH
HAHH
GUH! HURTS...!
CAN'T TAKE ANY MORE...
MAYBE I CAN DRINK AGAIN NOW...
GULP
HOARRK
I SPENT ALL DAY PUKING.
I TRIED WINE
I TRIED JUICE
I TRIED BEER
I COULDN'T SLEEP A WINK ALL NIGHT.
CHEEP CHEEP CHEEP
MAYBE TODAY IT'LL STAY DOWN!
SLLRRP

VRROOM
ULP!
HOARRK
URRR
...
HONK HONK
SKREE
TEE HEEHA HA
VRRMM
EEK
KIDS AND CARS... MAKE SUCH FRIGHTENING NOISES...
HONK
VRRMM
BEEP BEEP
HA HA HA
EEK
KABOOM
TEE HEE
SO VERY... VERY FRIGHTENING ...
AAH!
AAH!
TH--THAT PERSON... I'M AFRAID... AFRAID... SO, SO... AFRAID...!
THE HALLUCINATIONS HAD BEGUN.


小結
ALCOHOLIC
DAYS: 2

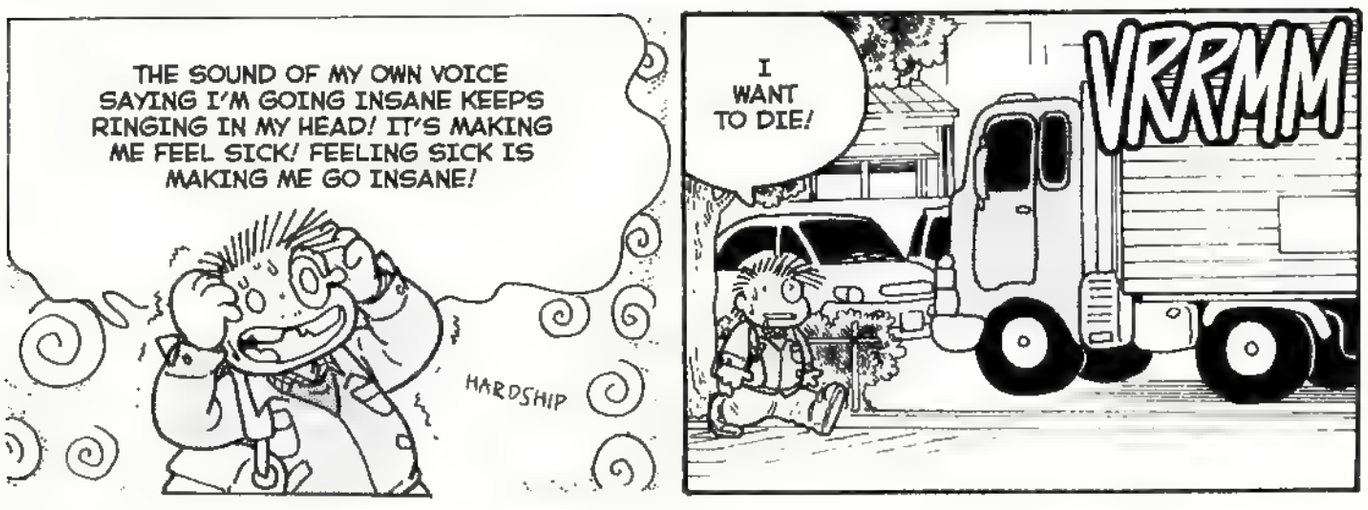

STARE
AIEEE!
HORRIFYING... OF COURSE! SAKE! MAYBE I CAN KEEP SOME SAKE DOWN! OF COURSE! GOTTA DRINK SAKE! SO SCARY! SO VERY SCARY!

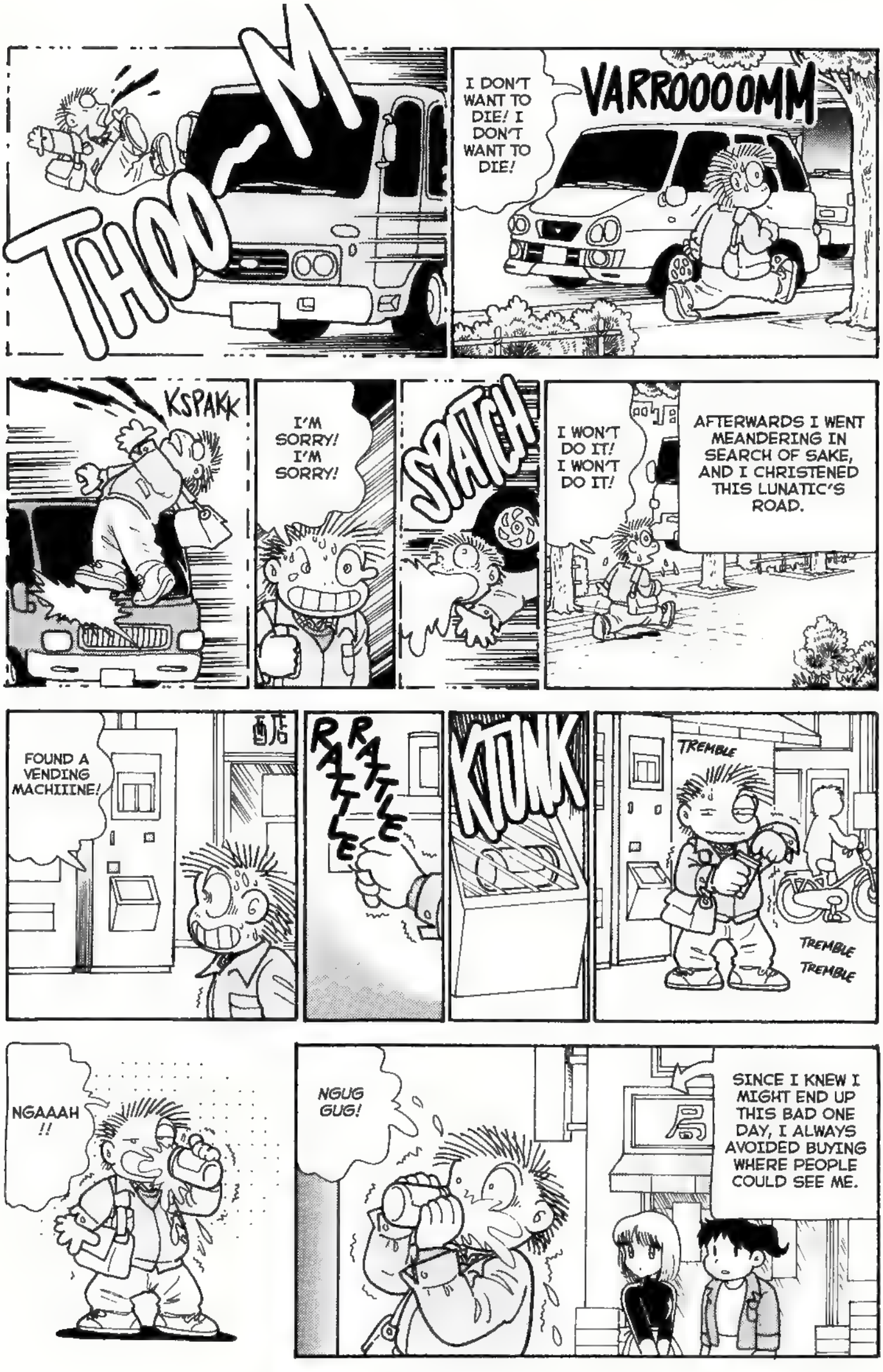

TH-- THESE KIDS...!
EE
TEE
K
HEE
EE
EEK
TEE
K
HEE
GUH!
TEETER —
VROOM
HONK
VMM
AIEEE!
SKREE
VAROOM
HONK
HONK
HONK
HONK


S-S-S-SAKE...
UWU-HHH...
AAAH!!
NO!

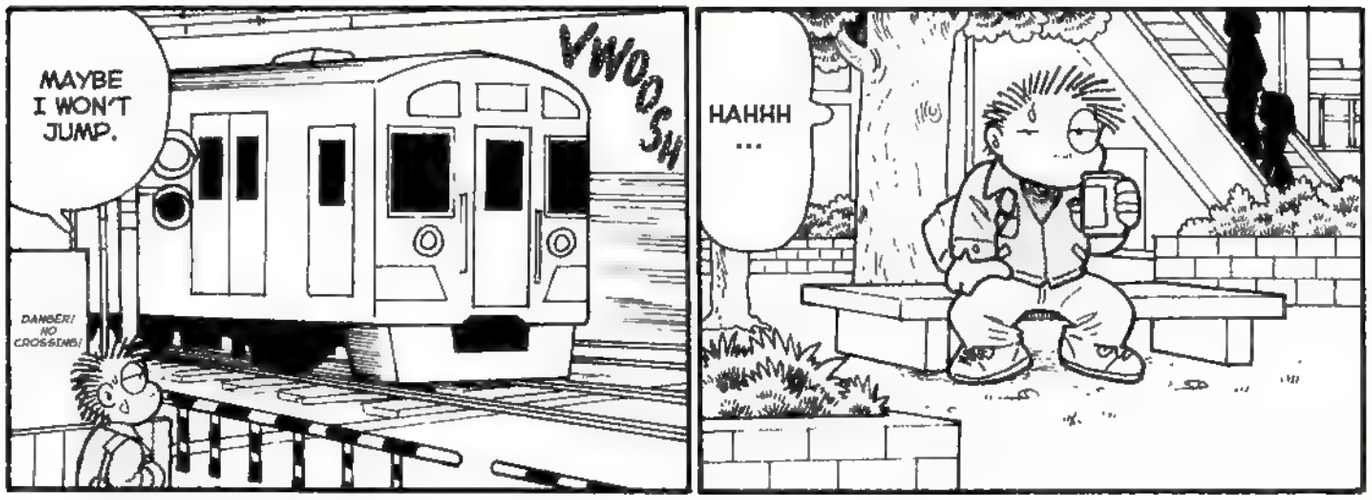
*OUT OF ORDER

EVEN THE HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS I USED TO LIKE WERE TERRIFYING.
I'M GOING INSANE...
I'M GOING INSANE I'M GOING INSANE
I'M GOING
I
INSANE
INSANE
INSANE


THE SOUND OF MY OWN VOICE SAYING I'M GOING INSANE KEEPS RINGING IN MY HEAD! IT'S MAKING ME FEEL SICK! FEELING SICK IS MAKING ME GO INSANE!
HARDSHIP
I WANT TO DIE!
VRRMM


THOOM
I DON'T WANT TO DIE! I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
VARROOOOMM
KSPAKK
I'M SORRY! I'M SORRY!
SPATCH
I WON'T DO IT! I WON'T DO IT!
AFTERWARDS I WENT MEANDERING IN SEARCH OF SAKE, AND I CHRISTENED THIS LUNATIC'S ROAD.
FOUND A VENDING MACHIIINE!
RATTLE RATTLE
KTUNK
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
NGAAAH !!
NGUG GUG!
SINCE I KNEW I MIGHT END UP THIS BAD ONE DAY, I ALWAYS AVOIDED BUYING WHERE PEOPLE COULD SEE ME.

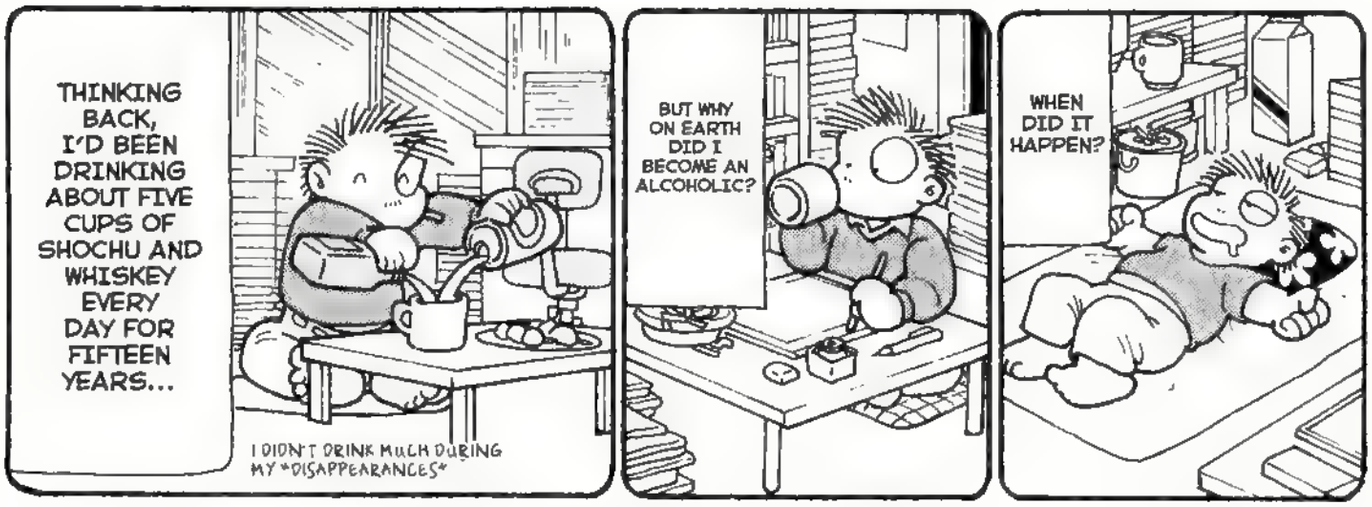
TOK
CHINK
CHINK
KLUNK
WHUP
FWIP FWIP
ALL RIGHT. NOW I'M THIS BAD I'VE GOT NO CHOICE BUT TO JUMP IN FRONT OF A TRAIN!
A TRAIN... A TRAIN...
DEATH BY TRAIN?
WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE DEATH BY TRAIN?
DEATH BY TRAIN, DEATH BY TRAIN!
KTTR
KTTR
KTTR
KTTR
MIRACULOUSLY, THE SAKE STAYED IN MY STOMACH.
BY THE TIME I ARRIVED AT THE NEARBY STATION, MY FEAR HAD FINALLY SUBSIDED
SAKE.

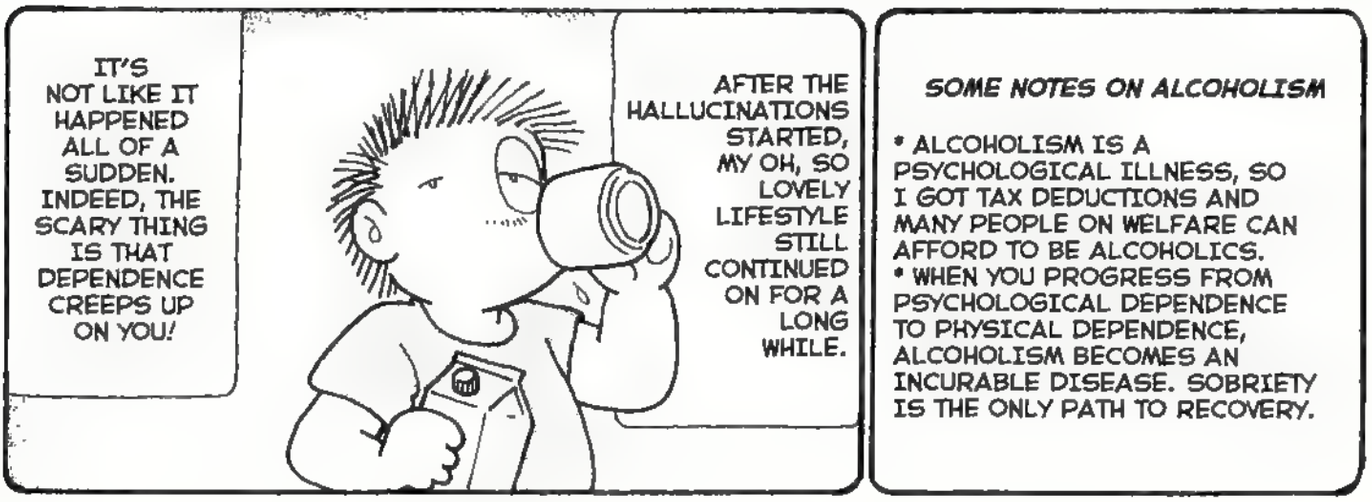


I WONDER IF ALL THAT WAS FROM NOT DRINKING ...?
"WITHDRAWAL" TO BE TECHNICAL.
N--N--N--NOOO! THIS CAN'T HAPPEN AGAIN! I'LL NEVER STOP DRINKING AGAIN!
NEVER THOUGHT TO QUIT DRINKING?!

SOME NOTES ON ALCOHOLISM

* NOT ALL ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE SUFFERERS EXPERIENCE HALLUCINATIONS.
* IN SOME CASES, THERE ARE AUDITORY HALLUCINATIONS.
* SOME PEOPLE NEVER SUFFER THEM.
* IN SOME CASES, PEOPLE COLLAPSE WITH ALCOHOLIC SEIZURES.
* IN SOME CASES, PEOPLE SPIT BLOOD AND DIE.


THINKING BACK, I'D BEEN DRINKING ABOUT FIVE CUPS OF SHOCHU AND WHISKEY EVERY DAY FOR FIFTEEN YEARS...
I DIDN'T DRINK MUCH DURING MY "DISAPPEARANCES"
BUT WHY ON EARTH DID I BECOME AN ALCOHOLIC?
WHEN DID IT HAPPEN?


IT'S NOT LIKE IT HAPPENED ALL OF A SUDDEN. INDEED, THE SCARY THING IS THAT DEPENDENCE CREEPS UP ON YOU!
AFTER THE HALLUCINATIONS STARTED, MY OH, SO LOVELY LIFESTYLE STILL CONTINUED ON FOR A LONG WHILE.

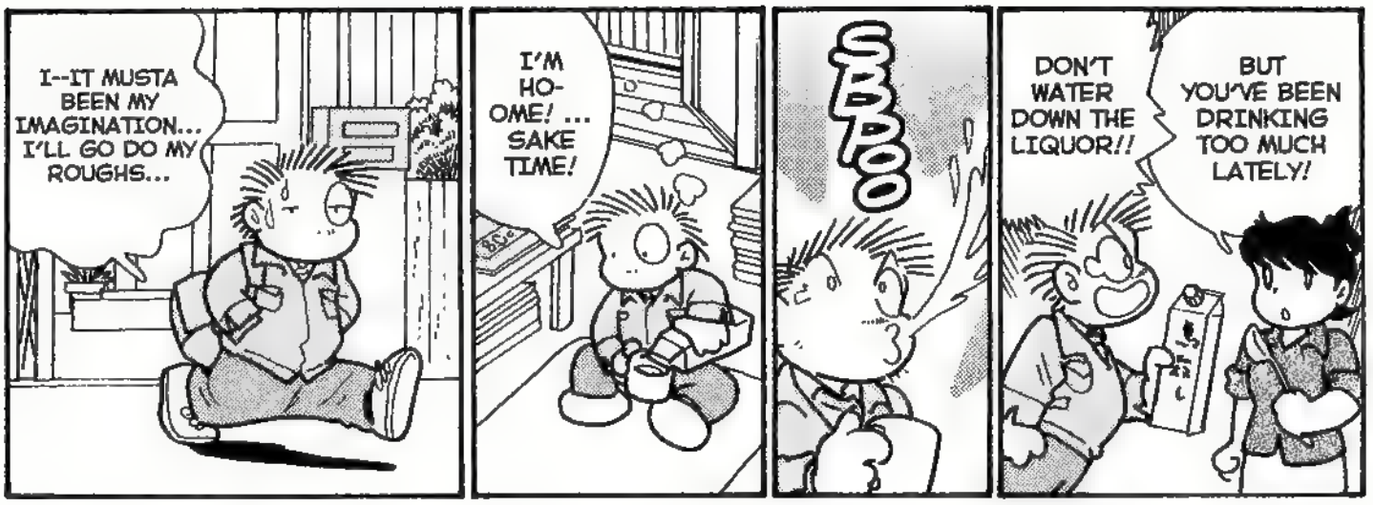
SOME NOTES ON ALCOHOLISM

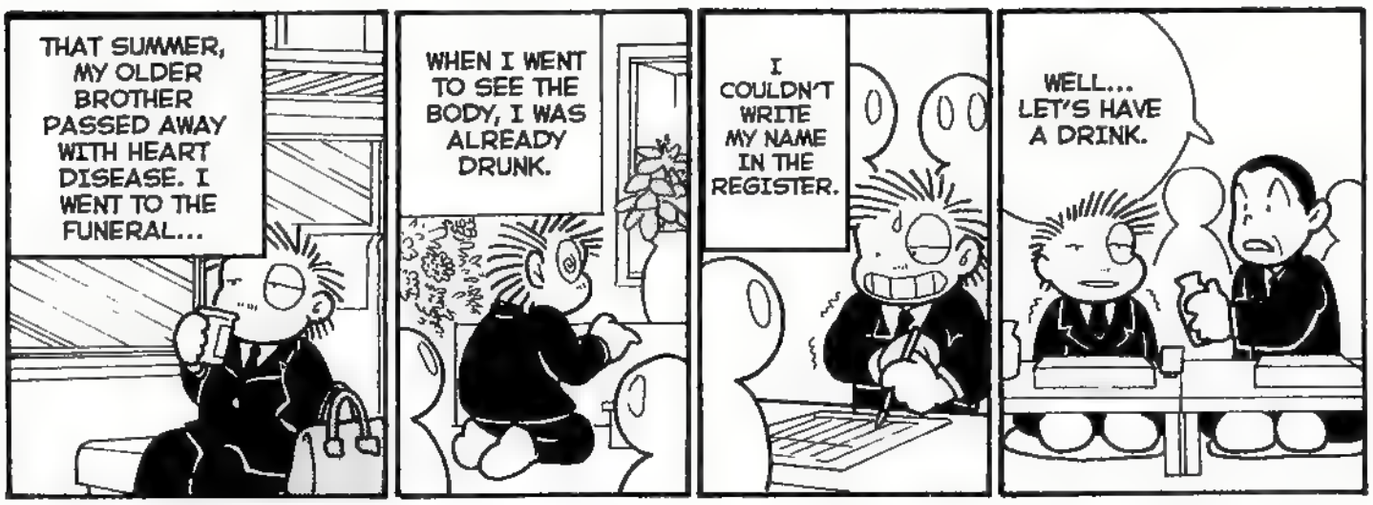
* ALCOHOLISM IS A PSYCHOLOGICAL ILLNESS, SO I GOT TAX DEDUCTIONS AND MANY PEOPLE ON WELFARE CAN AFFORD TO BE ALCOHOLICS.
* WHEN YOU PROGRESS FROM PSYCHOLOGICAL DEPENDENCE TO PHYSICAL DEPENDENCE, ALCOHOLISM BECOMES AN INCURABLE DISEASE. SOBRIETY IS THE ONLY PATH TO RECOVERY.

ALCOHOLIC
DAYS: 3

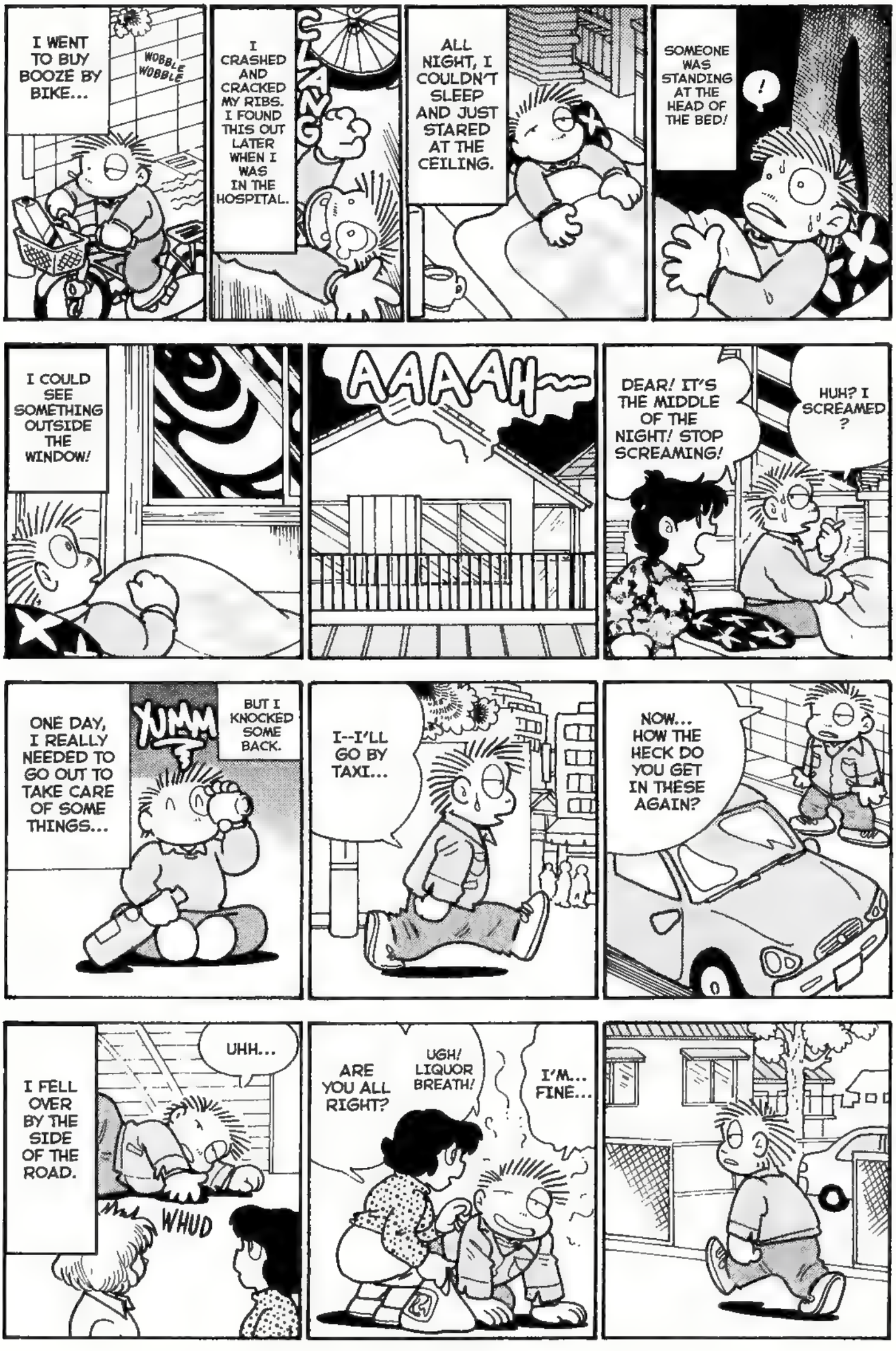
TO AVOID HALLUCI-NATIONS, I HAD TO NOT STOP DRINK-ING.
AND YET, I COULDN'T DRINK SO MUCH THAT I'D BE HUNG OVER AND CONSTANTLY PUKING THE NEXT DAY.
25
BUT IF I DIDN'T DRINK A CERTAIN AMOUNT, I COULDN'T SLEEP, AND IT WAS TRICKY FIGURING OUT HOW TO ALLOCATE THE VOLUME...
THREE IN THE MORNING! TWO IN THE AFTERNOON! FIVE AT NIGHT!
THE PERFECT PACE!
25

NIGHT ...
UGH... I KNEW IT. DIDN'T DRINK ENOUGH. CAN'T SLEEP...
I COLLECTED THE DROPS FROM THE EMPTY CARTONS.
NOTHING!
GOING FOR A WALK.
AT TWO O'CLOCK IN THE MORNING?!
I BOUGHT LIQUOR FROM A CONVENIENCE STORE AND FELL ASLEEP ON A PARK BENCH.
GWAHH
FWIP
WHUMP
OOH! FLOWERS BLOOMING, HUH!
PKK
YAY!! SOUVE-NIRS!!
URGHH ...
MOR-NING ...
LET ME OUT! LET ME OUT!
?
DON'T LEAVE ME LOCKED IN HERE! LET ME OUT!!
HONEY! OH MY GOD! OH MY GOD!
THDTHDTHD
THERE'S A WOMAN NEXT DOOR WHO'S BEEN LOCKED UP INSIDE! SHE'S SCREAMING TO BE LET OUT!
CHOP CHOP
CHOP CHOP CHOP


I--IT MUSTA BEEN MY IMAGINATION... I'LL GO DO MY ROUGHS...
I'M HO- OME! ... SAKE TIME!
SUDOO
DON'T WATER DOWN THE LIQUOR!!
BUT YOU'VE BEEN DRINKING TOO MUCH LATELY!

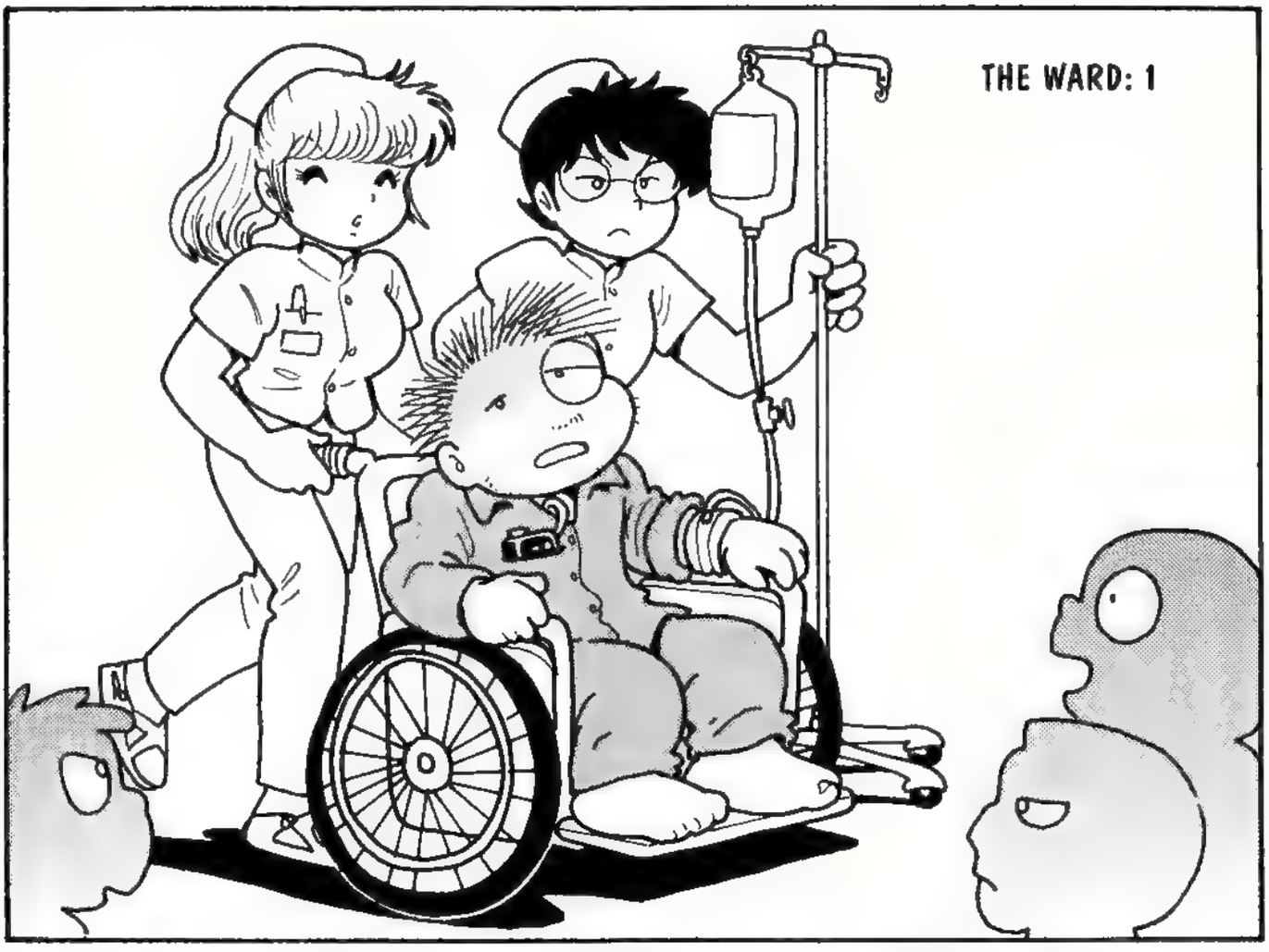

THAT SUMMER, MY OLDER BROTHER PASSED AWAY WITH HEART DISEASE. I WENT TO THE FUNERAL...
WHEN I WENT TO SEE THE BODY, I WAS ALREADY DRUNK.
I COULDN'T WRITE MY NAME IN THE REGISTER.
WELL... LET'S HAVE A DRINK.

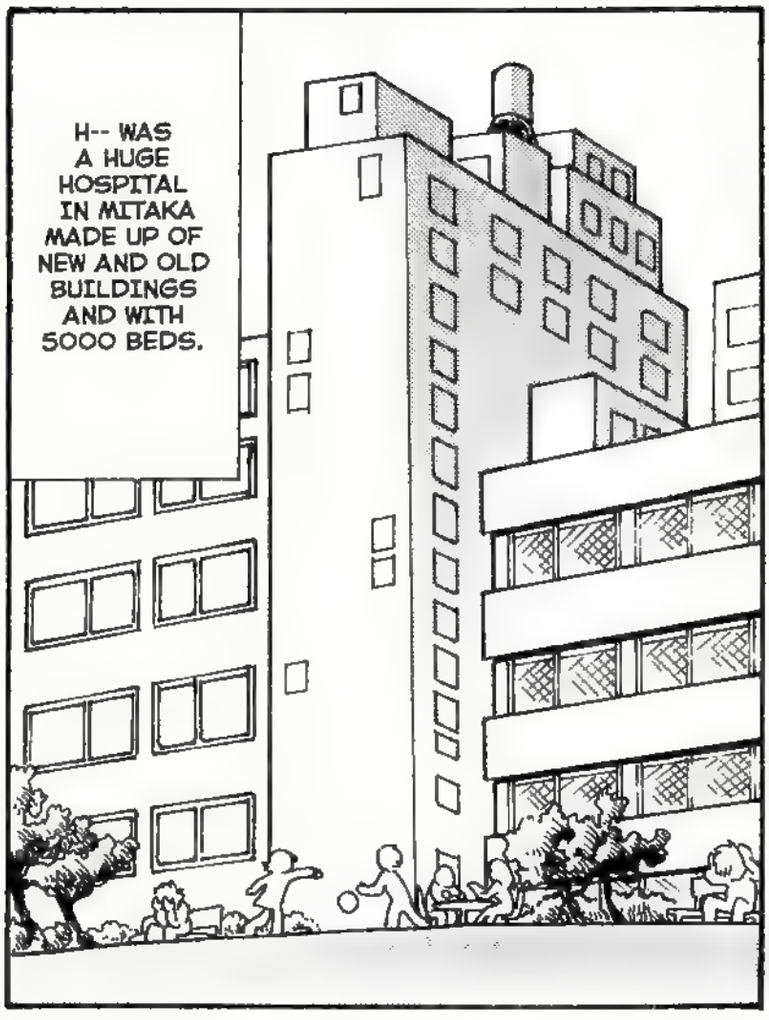
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
KTUNK
THE BOOK I WAS WORKING ON AROUND THIS TIME WAS "ALIEN EIRI" FOR BUNKASHA. IT'S GOOD VALUE BECAUSE YOU CAN COMPARE ITS QUALITY FROM BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER MY HOSPITALIZATION.
BUT PLEASE DON'T SAY IT'S NOT MUCH DIFFERENT, OKAY?
WHEN I MET MY EDITOR AT THE STATION TO GIVE HIM MY PAGES, I WAS ALREADY LOADED.
SLLRRPP
HIT ME AGAIN.
.....
I WAS ONLY DOING ONE SERIES, AND OF COURSE, IT WAS A MESS.

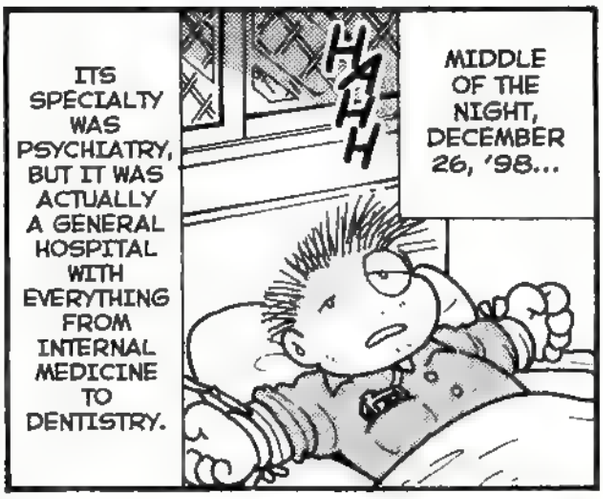

I WENT TO BUY BOOZE BY BIKE...
WOBBLE WOBBLE
I CRASHED AND CRACKED MY RIBS. I FOUND THIS OUT LATER WHEN I WAS IN THE HOSPITAL.
CLANG
ALL NIGHT, I COULDN'T SLEEP AND JUST STARED AT THE CEILING.
SOMEONE WAS STANDING AT THE HEAD OF THE BED!
!
I COULD SEE SOMETHING OUTSIDE THE WINDOW!
AAAAH~~
DEAR! IT'S THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT! STOP SCREAMING!
HUH? I SCREAMED ?
ONE DAY, I REALLY NEEDED TO GO OUT TO TAKE CARE OF SOME THINGS...
YUMM
BUT I KNOCKED SOME BACK.
I--I'LL GO BY TAXI...
NOW... HOW THE HECK DO YOU GET IN THESE AGAIN?
I FELL OVER BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD.
UHH...
WHUD
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
UGH! LIQUOR BREATH!
I'M... FINE...

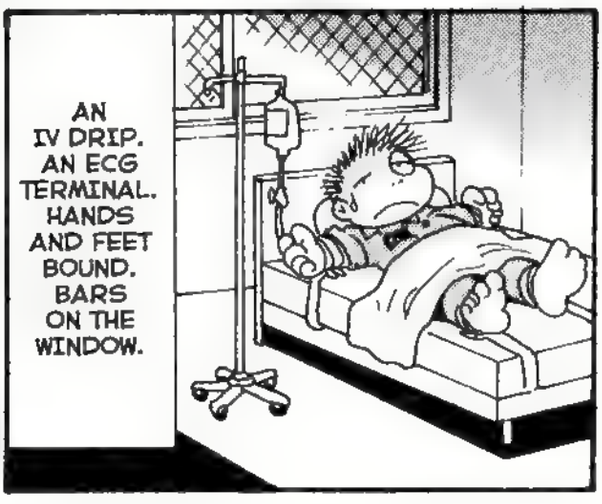
KAWHUMP
HEY, MISTER, YOU REALLY CAN'T BE SLEEPING IN MY PARKING LOT HERE, Y'KNOW?
O... OKAY ...
IN THE END, I NEVER MADE IT.
GOING BACK HOME
GYAAH!
HONEY! I CAN'T DRAW MANGA ANYMORE!!
WELL INK IN THE CHARACTERS AT LEAST! I'LL DO THE REST!
UGGUH ...
GAAH!
YES, YES. DRAW QUIETLY NOW!
I DON'T HAVE MUCH MEMORY AFTER THIS.
I'D SAVED 100 YEN COINS IN A PLASTIC BOTTLE.
L-- LIQUOR MONEY!
RKKRKK
SHRRING
MMM ...!
GWAH
WHA CHO K K

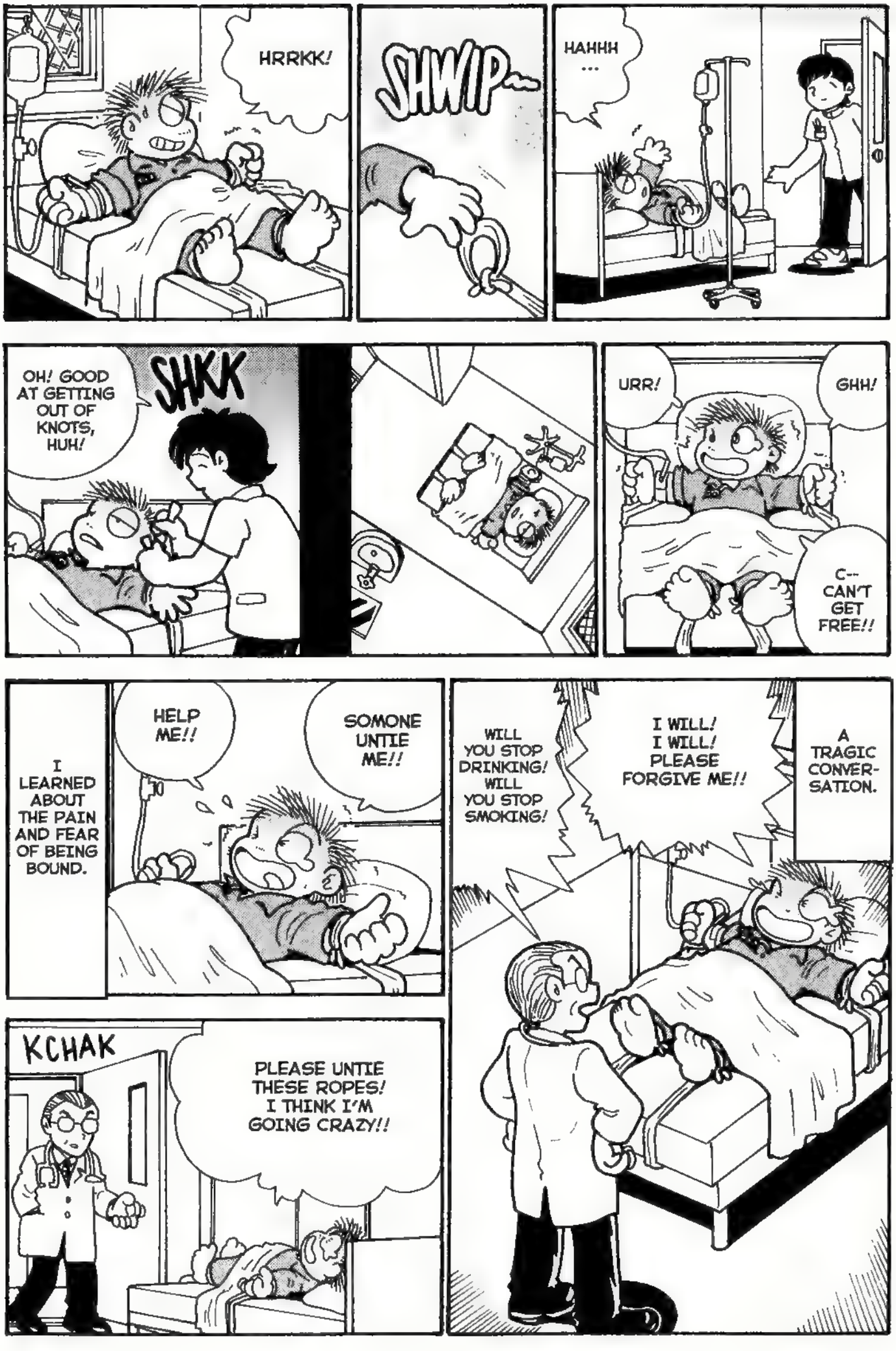
APPARENTLY, I'D BEEN ROLLED BY SOME KIDS.
HONEY! I'M REALLY HURTING!
VRRMMM
HAHHH ...
WH-- WHERE ARE WE GOING?!
XXX HOSPITAL.
VRRRMM~~~
NO WAY!! I HATE HOSPITALS!!
HERE. PLEASE SIGN THIS HOSPITA-LIZATION CONSENT FORM.
CRUSH
CRUSH
POKK
YOU CAN'T PUT ME IN A HOSPITAL! I'M AN ADULT!!
CONFUSED LOGIC.
KSS
FUMP
DECEMBER 25, '98. I WAS OFFICIALLY ADMITTED INTO A PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL.


THE WARD: 1


H-- WAS A HUGE HOSPITAL IN MITAKA MADE UP OF NEW AND OLD BUILDINGS AND WITH 5000 BEDS.


ITS SPECIALTY WAS PSYCHIATRY, BUT IT WAS ACTUALLY A GENERAL HOSPITAL WITH EVERYTHING FROM INTERNAL MEDICINE TO DENTISTRY.
HHHH
MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, DECEMBER 26, '98...


AN IV DRIP. AN ECG TERMINAL. HANDS AND FEET BOUND. BARS ON THE WINDOW.


HRRKK!
SHWIP
HAHHH ...
OH! GOOD AT GETTING OUT OF KNOTS, HUH!
SHKK
URR!
GHH!
C-- CAN'T GET FREE!!
I LEARNED ABOUT THE PAIN AND FEAR OF BEING BOUND.
HELP ME!!
SOMONE UNTIE ME!!
KCHAK
PLEASE UNTIE THESE ROPES! I THINK I'M GOING CRAZY!!
WILL YOU STOP DRINKING! WILL YOU STOP SMOKING!
I WILL! I WILL! PLEASE FORGIVE ME!!
A TRAGIC CONVER-SATION.

HAHHH ...
THANK GOODNESS ...
HM/
HOW ARE YOU, MISTER AZUMA?
UH... IF I STOP DRINKING FOR 48 HOURS I START TO HALLUCINATE.
DON'T WORRY. THERE'S MEDICINE IN THE DRIP.
THANKFULLY, THERE WERE NO HALLUCINATIONS.
MISTER AZUMA, YOU'RE HAVING EXAMINATIONS TODAY.
O... OKAY.
OHH! THAT GUY'S IN BAD SHAPE!
LOOKS LIKE HE GOT BEAT UP!

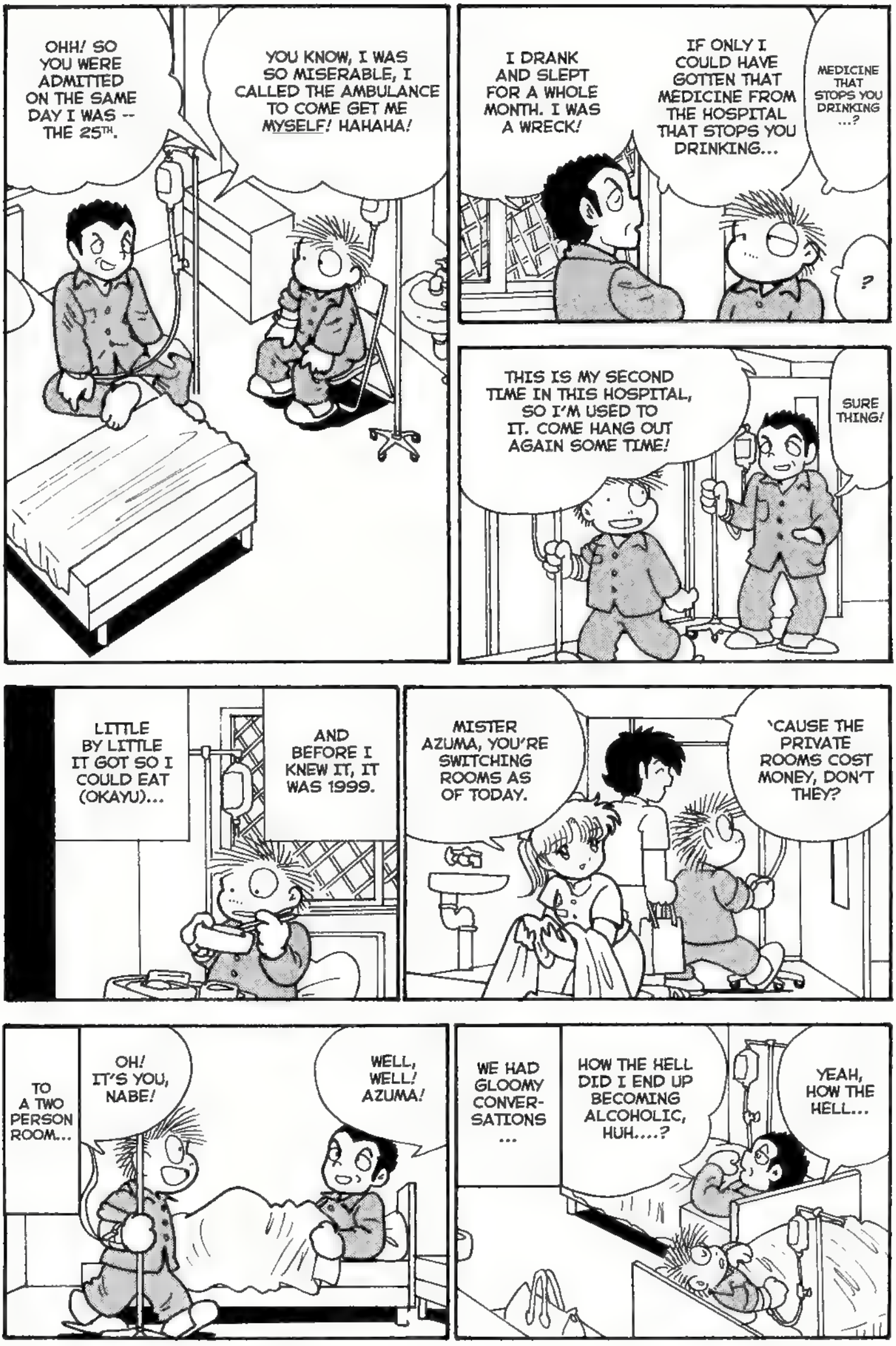
WELL, HE'S GOT 'EM.
HE SURE DOES.
I LATER LEARNED THAT WHAT THE NURSES WERE TALKING ABOUT WERE MY WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS.
INTERNAL MEDICINE WAS UNDER-GROUND.
KOFF! KOFF! GUH!
HERE'S A TISSUE!
HEHN! HEHN!
OH! DOCTOR! THERE'S BLOOD!
THAT'S NOT GOOD!
KOFF! KOFF!
MISTER AZUMA, DON'T SPIT OUT THE PHLEGM! JUST HOLD IT THERE!
KOFF!
UGGHH ...
NOW THIS IS GROSS...
OKAY, SPIT IT INTO HERE!
BLEH!
OH, THIS MUST HAVE JUST COME FROM YOUR THROAT. IT'S ALL RIGHT.
I UNDERWENT VARIOUS TESTS.

THAT'S ALL YOU CAN TAKE TODAY. ALL FINISHED!
I STARTED TO GET THE SHAKES A BIT.
IT GOT SO I COULD GET UP FOR THE TOILET.
BEFORE THAT I HAD DIAPERS.
I NEED A CIGARETTE!
THE COMMON AREA NEXT DOOR.
COULD YOU GIVE ME A CIGARETTE ...?
I'LL GIVE YOU ONE THIS TIME, BUT DON'T ASK AGAIN FROM ANYONE. THE RULE HERE IS NO BORROWING, NO LENDING, NO DEBTS.
ライター?
LIGHTER ON A ROPE
?
MISTER AZUMA! THEY SAY YOU GOT A CIGARETTE?
UH, YEAH.
NO, NO, NO!
I'M SORRY, MISTER T-OKA. THANK YOU.
THANKS VERY MUCH.
OH!
ALL THIS FUSS OVER ONE CIGA-RETTE.
LOOK, I BOUGHT THESE FOR YOU, SO GIVE ONE BACK TO THE PERSON YOU GOT IT FROM.

I'D LIKE TO MAKE A PHONE CALL.
WRITE YOUR NAME HERE. HERE'S 100 YEN.
THEY GAVE YOU MONEY FOR THE PHONE.
DEAR, COULD YOU BRING ME SOME CIGA-RETTES?
I LEFT THIRTY THOUSAND YEN WITH THE HOSPITAL -- USE THAT!
SHE SAID SHE LEFT SOME MONEY WITH YOU...?
YOU CAN'T JUST HAVE IT!
DEAR, COULD YOU BRING ME SOME CIGARETTES?
WHAT IS THIS?! I'M BUSY HERE YOU KNOW!!
WHY YOU--!! YOU'VE GOT CIGARETTES RIGHT THERE!!
THE NURSE BOUGHT THESE FOR ME.
WELL, WE'LL ASK HER AND SEE! NURSE!
I BOUGHT THOSE CIGARETTES WITH YOUR WIFE'S MONEY!
THERE! SEE!
E?
I LEARNED LATER THAT THE HOSPITAL VERY STRICTLY CONTROLLED PATIENTS' MONEY FOR THINGS LIKE CIGARETTES, AND YOU HAD TO GO THROUGH THIS SYSTEM OF FILLING OUT A REQUEST AND PICKING UP THE MONEY FROM THE GENERAL AFFAIRS DEPARTMENT A WEEK LATER.
TEE HEE HEE HEE
THE LYING NURSE (BEAUTIFUL THOUGH).

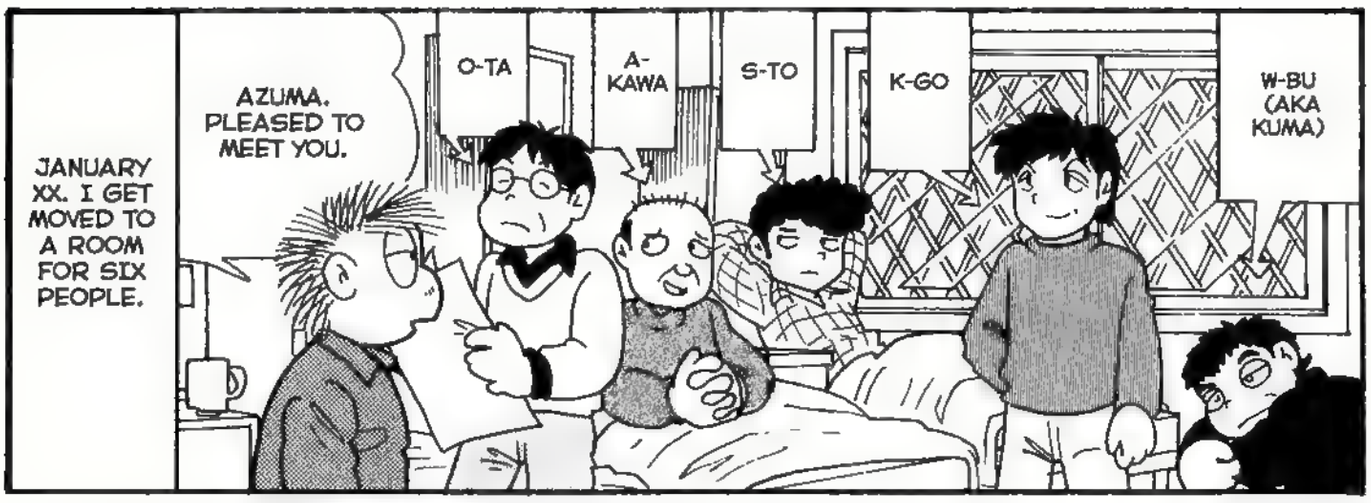
THE WARD: 2
UGH...
COVERED IN BLOOD...
UHH... MY DRIP NEEDLE GOT PULLED OUT...
IT'S NOT UNUSUAL. DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. CHANGE YOUR CLOTHES, PLEASE.
KSS
OH. I'VE GOTTA STILL BE ON IT?

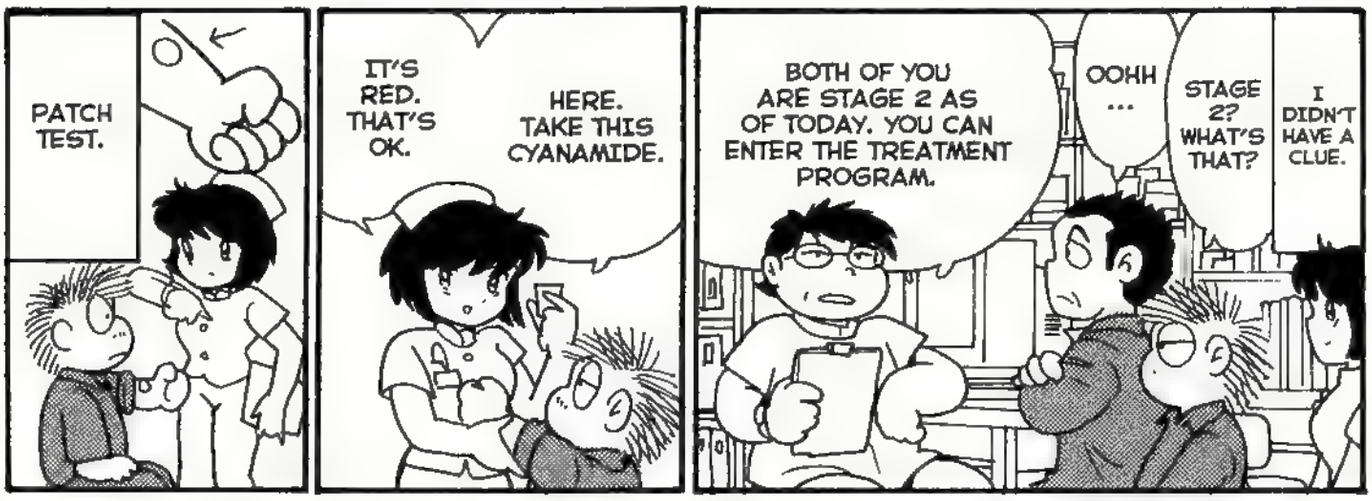
I WOULDN'T MIND SOMETHING TO EAT TOO...
YOU WANT TO TRY EATING? I DON'T THINK YOU'LL HAVE ANY LUCK, BUT...
THE RULE WAS YOU WERE ONLY ALLOWED TO SMOKE IN THE COMMON AREA.
HOARRK
I HAD NO LUCK. THE NURSE KNEW WHAT HE WAS TALKING ABOUT.
APPARENTLY NEW ADMITTEES DIDN'T HAVE THEIR OWN LIGHTERS.
NO ONE TALKED TO ME. IT WAS HARD.
OH! ARE YOU A NEW ARRIVAL TOO?
OH! ANOTHER DRIPPER! HEY THERE!
AZUMA, HUH? MY NAME'S WATANABE. YOU CAN CALL ME "NABE."
ALL RIGHT, NABE.
I'VE STILL GOT MY OWN ROOM. COME HANG OUT!


OHH! SO YOU WERE ADMITTED ON THE SAME DAY I WAS -- THE 25TH.
YOU KNOW, I WAS SO MISERABLE, I CALLED THE AMBULANCE TO COME GET ME MYSELF! HAHAHA!
I DRANK AND SLEPT FOR A WHOLE MONTH. I WAS A WRECK!
IF ONLY I COULD HAVE GOTTEN THAT MEDICINE FROM THE HOSPITAL THAT STOPS YOU DRINKING...
MEDICINE THAT STOPS YOU DRINKING ...?
?
THIS IS MY SECOND TIME IN THIS HOSPITAL, SO I'M USED TO IT. COME HANG OUT AGAIN SOME TIME!
SURE THING!
LITTLE BY LITTLE IT GOT SO I COULD EAT (OKAYU)...
AND BEFORE I KNEW IT, IT WAS 1999.
MISTER AZUMA, YOU'RE SWITCHING ROOMS AS OF TODAY.
'CAUSE THE PRIVATE ROOMS COST MONEY, DON'T THEY?
TO A TWO PERSON ROOM...
OH! IT'S YOU, NABE!
WELL, WELL! AZUMA!
WE HAD GLOOMY CONVER-SATIONS ...
HOW THE HELL DID I END UP BECOMING ALCOHOLIC, HUH....?
YEAH, HOW THE HELL...

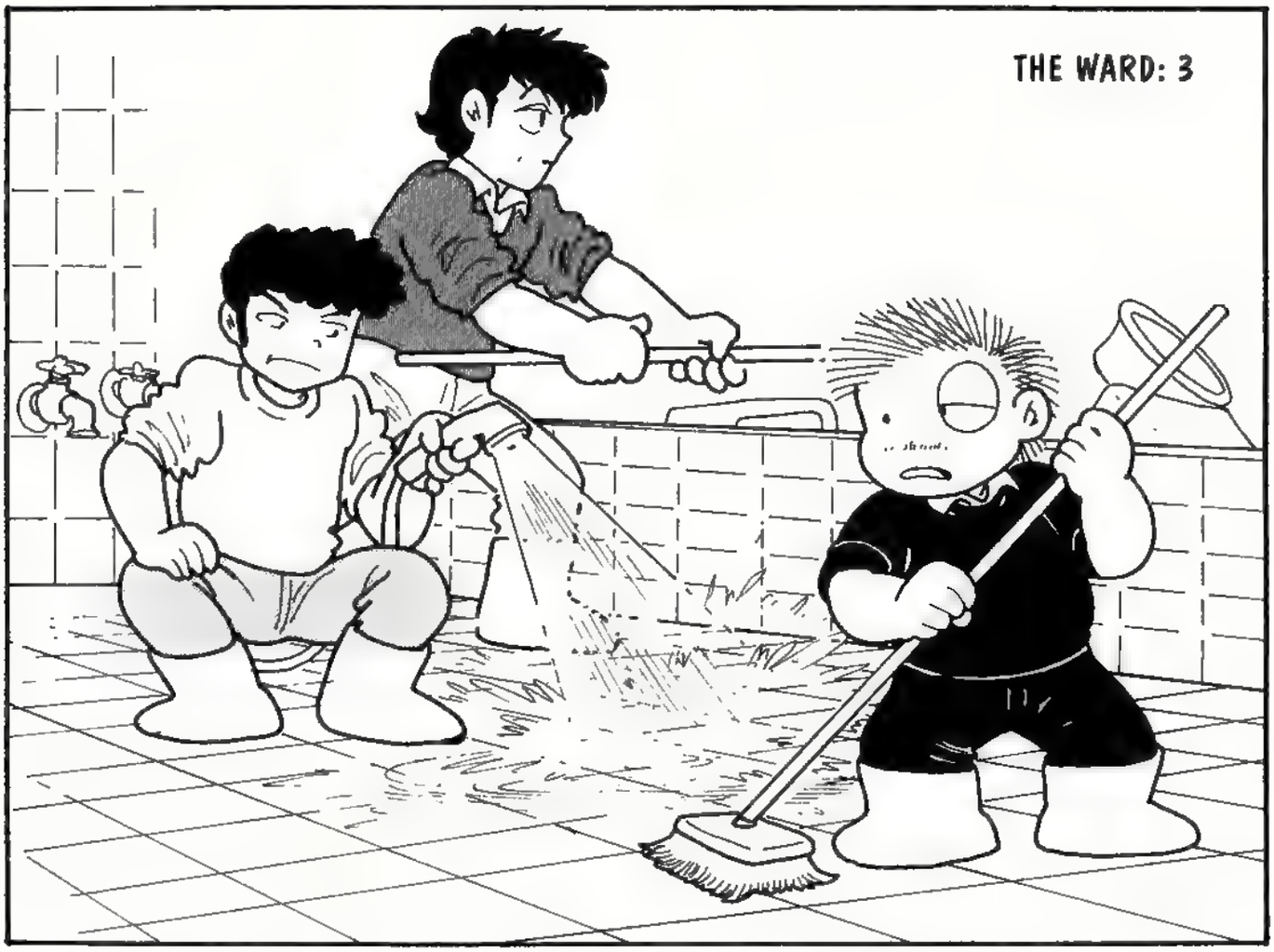
I THINK SHE'LL PROBABLY DIVORCE ME.
MY WIFE ESCAPED FROM ME A LONNNG TIME AGO!
AZUMA, DON'T YOU JUST WISH YOU WERE DEAD...
YEAH, I WISH I WAS DEAD...
SHOW ME YOUR HANDS A SECOND.
THEY'RE RED. MEANS YOUR LIVER'S WRECKED.
MINE'RE WHITE, RIGHT?
YEAH, MOSTLY.
I'M FINE. YOU'LL DIE OF CIRRHOSIS!
STOP!! PLEASE!!
I GOT UP TO USE THE TOILET IN THE NIGHT WHEN...
I TRIPPED!
COLLISION WITH NABE
I SPLIT OPEN MY HEEL.
THESE ARE THE LAST DRIPS FOR BOTH OF YOU.
AW! YAHOO!
I CAN HARDLY WAIT!
HRRK

NABE'S SECRET ART OF SPEEDING UP THE DRIP.
DRIIIP
DON'T TRY TO COPY ME! IT ALL TURNS TO PISS!
THERE! IT'S FINISHED!
AND FINALLY I WAS FREE TOO.
AHH! WHAT A RELIEF
MISTER AZUMA! CHECKUP!
THIS TIME I HAD A CT SCAN.
THERE ARE SCARS FROM BROKEN RIBS HERE!
MISTER NABE, WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME FOR A WALK?
SURE!
GUH?
HONEY, THE NURSE NEVER ASKS ME TO GO FOR WALKS WITH HER! IT'S DISCRIMINATION!!
AWW! WHY DO I HAVE TO LISTEN TO THIS!
I THINK THE REASON WAS BECAUSE NABE WAS A VOLUNTARY ADMITTEE (HE'D BEEN ADMITTED OF HIS OWN VOLITION), BUT I WAS FORCIBLY ADMITTED ON MY FAMILY'S CONSENT.
APPARENTLY, NABE SUDDENLY ERUPTED IN THE MIDDLE OF HIS WALK.
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL IF I GO BUY SOME JUICE!!
I TOLD YOU -- NO FOOD OR DRINKS DURING THE WALK!
WATANABE, PLEASE BEHAVE YOURSELF!
IT TOOK EVERYTHING THAT RAT BASTARD K-IZUMI (THE HEAD NURSE) HAD TO TRY AND TO HOLD ME BACK!
HAHAHA!


JANUARY XX. I GET MOVED TO A ROOM FOR SIX PEOPLE.
AZUMA. PLEASED TO MEET YOU.
O-TA
A-KAWA
S-TO
K-GO
W-BU (AKA KUMA)

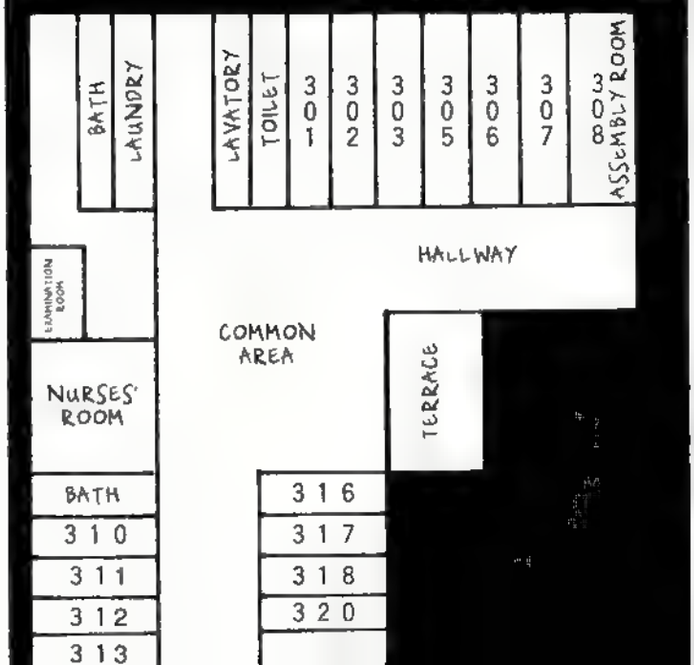

PATCH TEST.
IT'S RED. THAT'S OK.
HERE. TAKE THIS CYANAMIDE.
BOTH OF YOU ARE STAGE 2 AS OF TODAY. YOU CAN ENTER THE TREATMENT PROGRAM.
OOHH ...
STAGE 2? WHAT'S THAT?
I DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE.

STARTING TOMORROW, YOU'LL FOLLOW THE DAILY WORK TIMETABLE!
YOU'RE FREE TO GO OUT WALKING UNTIL FOUR O'CLOCK TODAY, BUT DON'T LEAVE THE GROUNDS, OKAY?
I CAN GO FOR A WALK?!
MY FIRST FRESH AIR IN 19 DAYS...
HAHH



H--
HOSPITALWARD B3 WAS FOR ALCOHOLICS (AND DRUG USERS). THERE WERE FIFTY PATIENTS (MEN AND WOMEN MIXED). AS PART OF THE TREATMENT PROGRAM, FOR ABOUT THREE MONTHS (NINETY DAYS) WE FOLLOWED A MINUTE BY MINUTE SCHEDULE.

WE WERE SELF-GOVERNING, WITH SOME "EXECUTIVES" IN CHARGE OF ALL THE PATIENTS. WE WERE DIVIDED INTO GROUPS BY ROOM TO CLEAN THE WARD, PREPARE THE TABLE FOR MEALS, AND CLEAN UP AFTER, ETC.



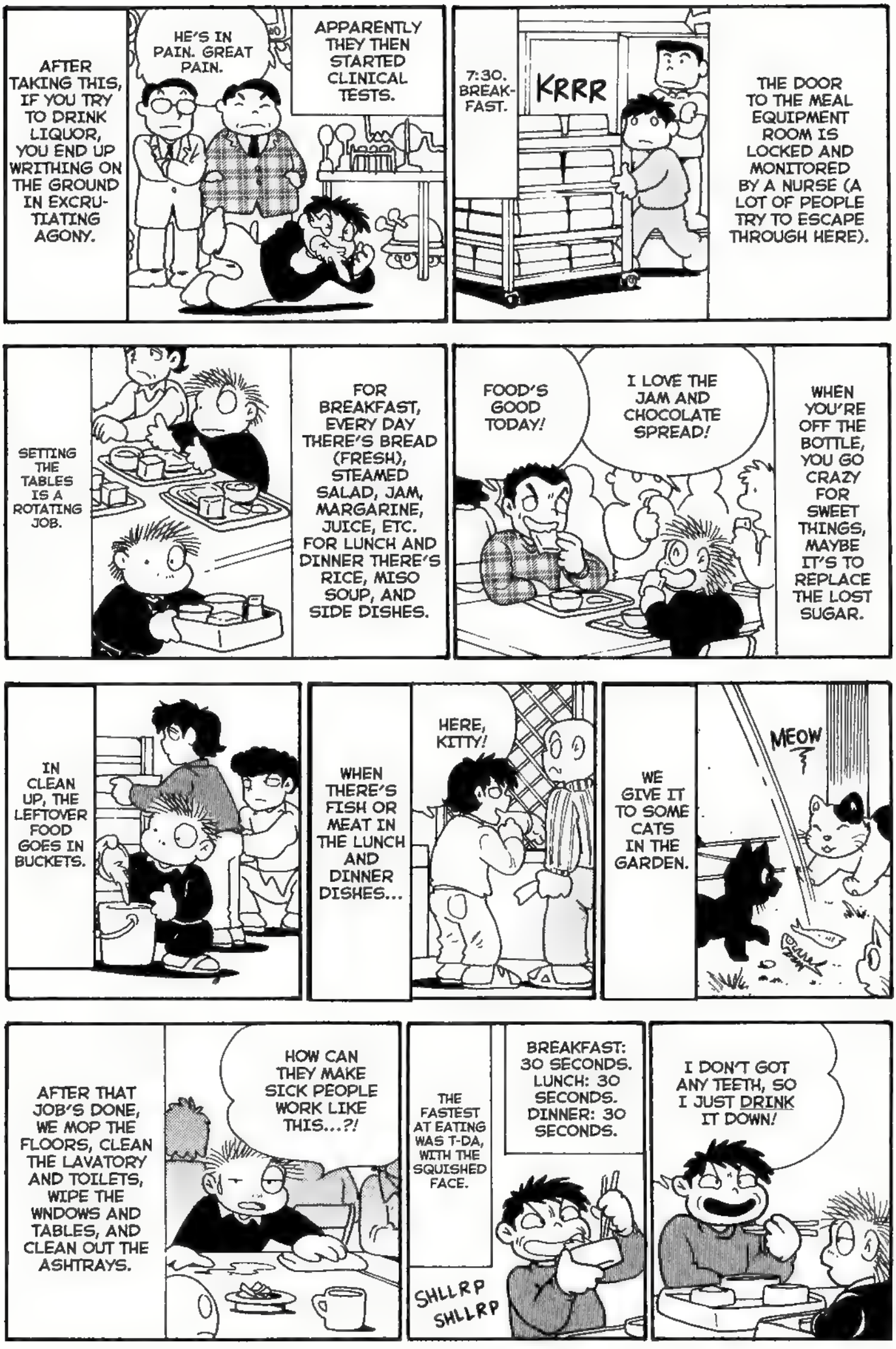
A TYPICAL DAY:

6:00 AM: GET UP ON THE BELL
WASH UP
6:30 AM: RADIO CALISTHENICS

MANY OF THE LONG-TIMERS ARE STILL SLEEPING.

7:00 AM: WE'RE GIVEN CYANAMIDE.

MEDICAL CYANAMIDE: MADE FROM CYANAMIDE AND CALCIUM CONTAINING LIME NITORGEN. IT WAS DISCOVERED WHEN PEOPLE WORKING AT FERTILIZING SITES BECAME SICK IF THEY DRANK ALCOHOL. IT ACTS AS AN INHIBITOR OF ACETALDEHYDE DEHYDROGENASE.


AFTER TAKING THIS, IF YOU TRY TO DRINK LIQUOR, YOU END UP WRITHING ON THE GROUND IN EXCRUTIATING AGONY.
HE'S IN PAIN. GREAT PAIN.
APPARENTLY THEY THEN STARTED CLINICAL TESTS.
7:30. BREAKFAST.
KRRR
THE DOOR TO THE MEAL EQUIPMENT ROOM IS LOCKED AND MONITORED BY A NURSE (A LOT OF PEOPLE TRY TO ESCAPE THROUGH HERE).
SETTING THE TABLES IS A ROTATING JOB.
FOR BREAKFAST, EVERY DAY THERE'S BREAD (FRESH), STEAMED SALAD, JAM, MARGARINE, JUICE, ETC. FOR LUNCH AND DINNER THERE'S RICE, MISO SOUP, AND SIDE DISHES.
FOOD'S GOOD TODAY!
I LOVE THE JAM AND CHOCOLATE SPREAD!
WHEN YOU'RE OFF THE BOTTLE, YOU GO CRAZY FOR SWEET THINGS, MAYBE IT'S TO REPLACE THE LOST SUGAR.
IN CLEAN UP, THE LEFTOVER FOOD GOES IN BUCKETS.
WHEN THERE'S FISH OR MEAT IN THE LUNCH AND DINNER DISHES...
HERE, KITTY!
WE GIVE IT TO SOME CATS IN THE GARDEN.
MEOW
AFTER THAT JOB'S DONE, WE MOP THE FLOORS, CLEAN THE LAVATORY AND TOILETS, WIPE THE WNDOWS AND TABLES, AND CLEAN OUT THE ASHTRAYS.
HOW CAN THEY MAKE SICK PEOPLE WORK LIKE THIS...?!
THE FASTEST AT EATING WAS T-DA, WITH THE SQUISHED FACE.
BREAKFAST: 30 SECONDS. LUNCH: 30 SECONDS. DINNER: 30 SECONDS.
SHLLRP SHLLRP
I DON'T GOT ANY TEETH, SO I JUST DRINK IT DOWN!

WITH HIS DENTURES IN, HE WAS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT PERSON.

SAY, YOU LOOK PRETTY GOOD!

8:00. CLEANING THE BATHS.

K-GO WAS THE LEADER OF OUR SIX-MAN ROOM. THE K-GO METHOD OF WASHING THE TUB WAS THROWING THE STOOLS, PAILS, AND CLEANSER ALL INTO THE HOT WATER TOGETHER AND SWISHING IT ALL AROUND.

ALL DONE!

SPLISH SPLISH

K-GO WAS LAID BACK AND KIND, AND LOOKED OUT FOR YOU.

AZUMA, YOU'VE GOT STRONG CHARACTER. YOU'LL RECOVER.

R-- REALLY?

WHY WAS A GUY LIKE THIS ON WELFARE? I WONDERED. BUT HE WAS.

FROM 8:30 WAS LAUNDRY TIME. YOU HAD TO PUT 100 YEN IN TO USE THE MACHINES IN THE LAUNDRY ROOM, SO I HANDWASHED MY STUFF.

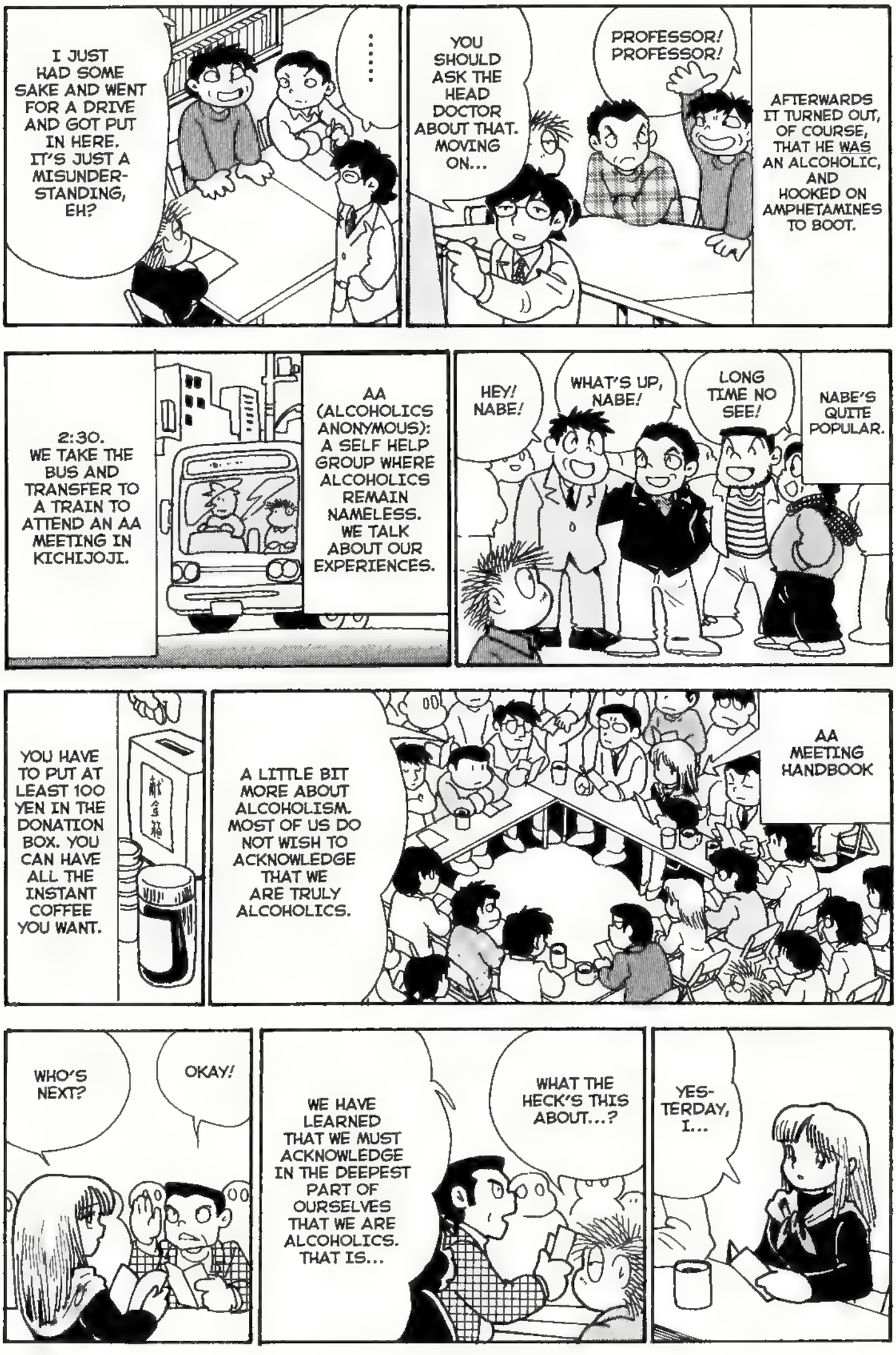
WE DRIED IT ON THE TERRACE.

THERE WAS A "GUARD" BECAUSE SOMETIMES PEOPLE TRIED TO JUMP DOWN (IT WAS THE THIRD FLOOR).

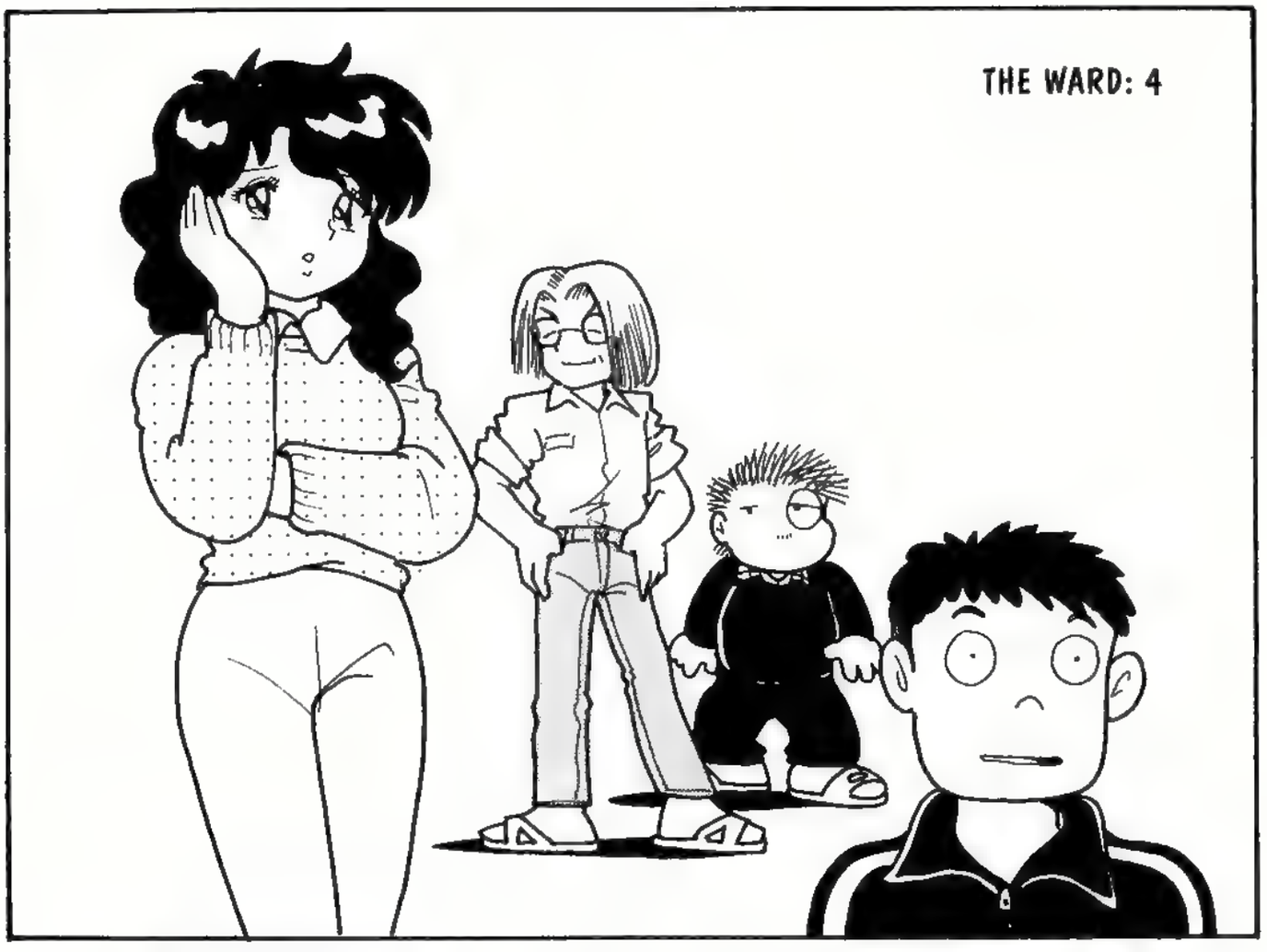
9:50. MORNING MEETINGS. PEOPLE WHO FEEL UNWELL REPORT IT AND AFTERWARDS GET CHECKED OUT BY THE DOCTOR IN CHARGE.

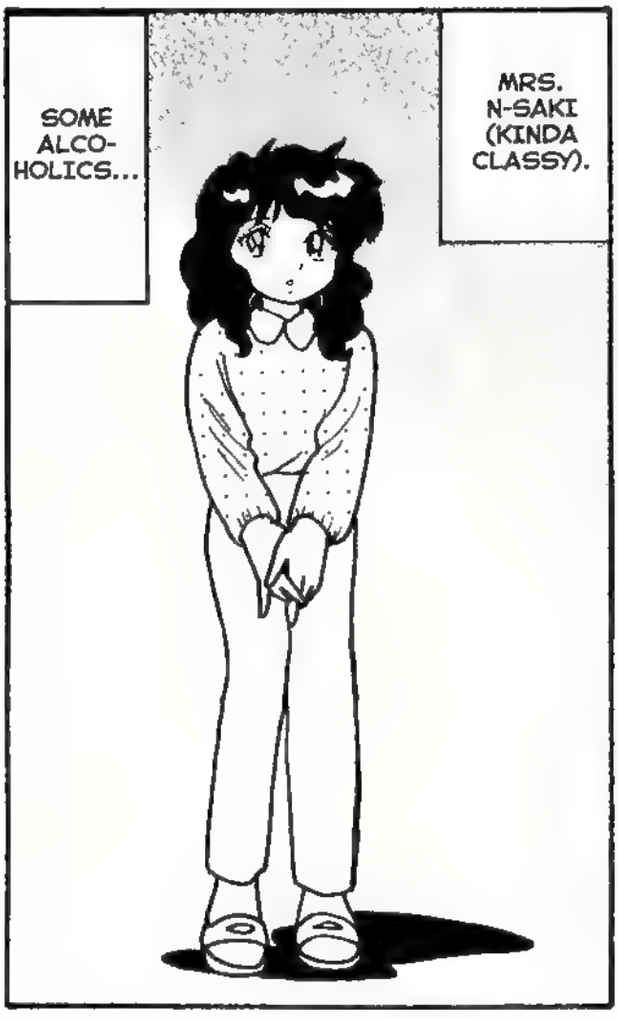
10:00. ALCOHOLICS MEETING (ONCE A WEEK WE REFLECT ON THE THINGS THAT HAVE HAPPENED THAT WEEK). IT'S PRESIDED OVER BY PATIENTS. DOCTORS, NURSES, AND CASE WORKERS ALSO ATTEND.

THE CONSTITUTION OF JAPAN, ARTICLE 13: ALL OF THE PEOPLE SHALL BE RESPECTED AS INDIVIDUALS! THEIR RIGHT TO LIFE, LIBERTY, AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS SHALL, TO THE EXTENT THAT IT DOES NOT INTERFERE WITH THE PUBLIC WELFARE, BE THE SUPREME CONSIDERATION IN LEGISLATION AND IN OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS!
I AM A FREE MAN! IF YOU RELEASE ME, I WILL DRINK!!
MISTER Y-MURA: HOSPITALIZED TWO YEARS
BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH...
WHAT'S A BROAD THIS OLD DOING IN A PLACE LIKE THIS?!
10:50. TEMPERATURE TAKING, REPORTS ON APPETITE AND DIGESTION.
12:50 PM. LUNCH. CHOCK FULL OF RICE AND WARM MISO SOUP.
SECOND SERVINGS OF RICE IN JARS.
I CAN'T REMEMBER THE SIDE DISHES, BUT THEY WERE NOT GOOD. ATE 'EM ALL THOUGH. THE TEA WAS HOUJI CHA.
I LOOKED FORWARD TO THE OCCASIONAL CURRY OR UDON.
1:30. "A" MEETING (AN EXPLANATION OF THE MECHANICS OF ALCOHOLISM FOR NEW ADMITTEES)
アルコール依存症
NOW THEN, TO BEGIN... ALCOHOLISM IS...
...AN INCURABLE ILLNESS. YOU WILL HAVE IT FOR LIFE.
WHA--?!
*A = ADDICTION
JUST LIKE YOU CAN'T TURN A PICKLE BACK INTO A CUCUMBER.
GUH!!
N--NABE, DID YOU HEAR THAT?!
2ND TIME AROUND. JUST KILLING TIME.
PROFESSOR, I'M NOT AN ALCOHOLIC, AM I!
T-DA


I JUST HAD SOME SAKE AND WENT FOR A DRIVE AND GOT PUT IN HERE. IT'S JUST A MISUNDER-STANDING, EH?
.....
YOU SHOULD ASK THE HEAD DOCTOR ABOUT THAT. MOVING ON...
PROFESSOR! PROFESSOR!
AFTERWARDS IT TURNED OUT, OF COURSE, THAT HE WAS AN ALCOHOLIC, AND HOOKED ON AMPHETAMINES TO BOOT.
2:30. WE TAKE THE BUS AND TRANSFER TO A TRAIN TO ATTEND AN AA MEETING IN KICHIJOJI.
AA (ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS): A SELF HELP GROUP WHERE ALCOHOLICS REMAIN NAMELESS. WE TALK ABOUT OUR EXPERIENCES.
HEY! NABE!
WHAT'S UP, NABE!
LONG TIME NO SEE!
NABE'S QUITE POPULAR.
YOU HAVE TO PUT AT LEAST 100 YEN IN THE DONATION BOX. YOU CAN HAVE ALL THE INSTANT COFFEE YOU WANT.
A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT ALCOHOLISM. MOST OF US DO NOT WISH TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT WE ARE TRULY ALCOHOLICS.
AA MEETING HANDBOOK
WHO'S NEXT?
OKAY!
WE HAVE LEARNED THAT WE MUST ACKNOWLEDGE IN THE DEEPEST PART OF OURSELVES THAT WE ARE ALCOHOLICS. THAT IS...
WHAT THE HECK'S THIS ABOUT...?
YES-TERDAY, I...

THE SINGING OF THE TREES LIKE THE WIND? THAT VOICE INSIDE? HEAR IT? CONNECTIONS WITH FRIENDS? WARM HEARTS? MEMORIES YOU'VE FORGOTTEN? ETERNITY FAR FAR AWAY?
THE MODERATOR MUTTERED INCOMPREHENSIBLE WORDS FOR 30 MINUTES. ABOUT WHAT? – I HAD NO IDEA.
NOW THEN. GO AHEAD, YOU TO THE BACK LEFT.
HELLO. I'M KEN, AND I AM AN ALCOHOLIC.
HI, KEN!!
EVERY DAY I'M STAYING SOBER!
CLAP CLAP CLAP
I'M YOSHIO. I AM AN ALCOHOLIC.
HI, YOSHIO!
EVERY DAY I'M STAYING SOBER!
HANG IN THERE!
STAY SOBER EVERY DAY!
HAI
HAI
HAI
GOD GRANT ME SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE, COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN, AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE...
.....
THAT'S ALL FOR TODAY. LET'S ALL READ THE PRAYER TO FINISH!




SOME ALCO-HOLICS...
MRS. N-SAKI (KINDA CLASSY).

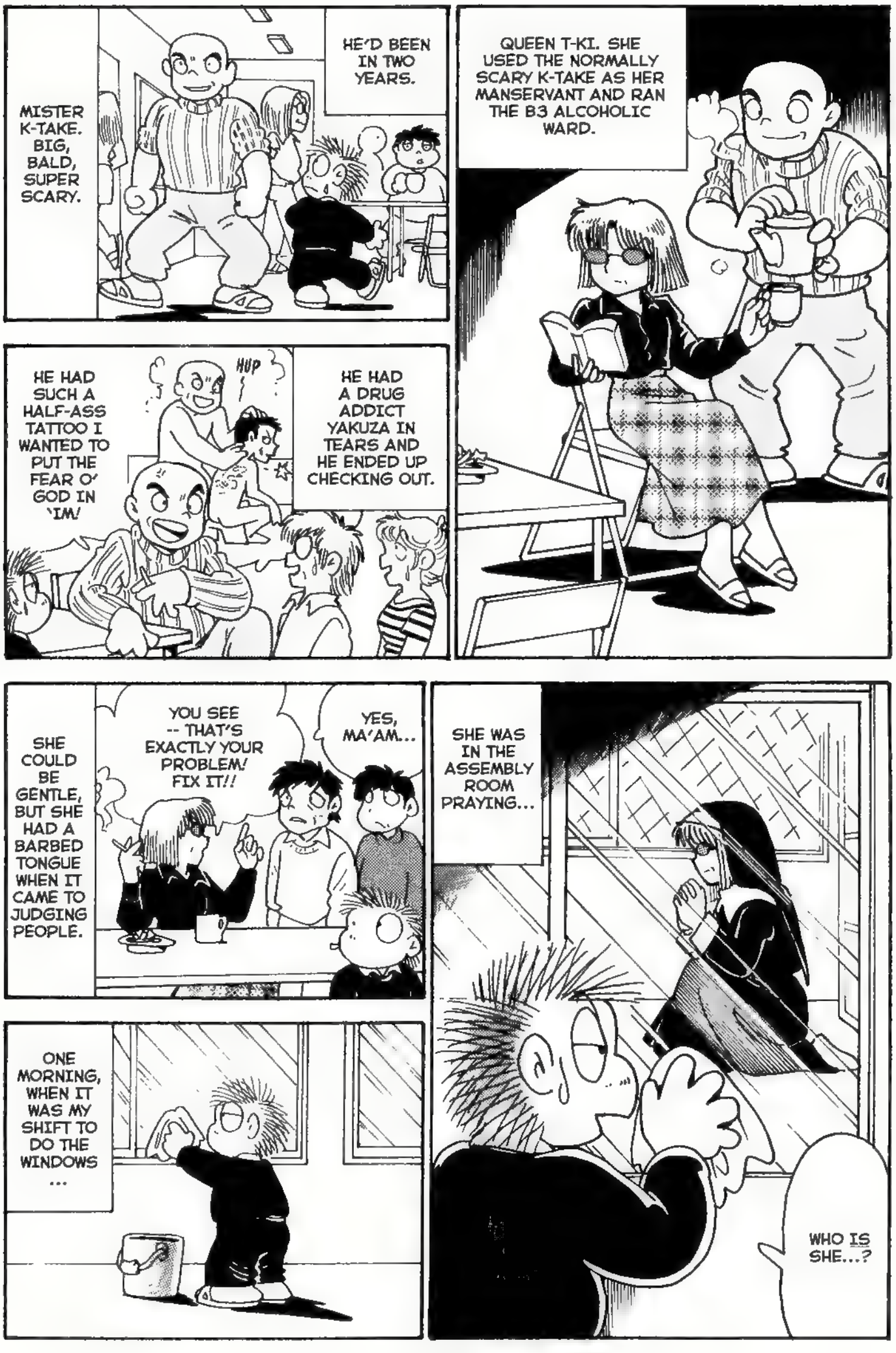
I'D LOVE TA GET SOME SWEETS!
YEAH, I'D LOVE SOME SWEETS.
MRS. N-SAKI, DO YOU GOT ANY SWEETS?
I GOT SOME FROM THE PURCHASE DEPARTMENT, IF THAT'S OKAY...
YAHOO!
THE PURCHASE DEPARTMENT WAS INSIDE THE HOSPITAL. YOU CAN PLACE AN ORDER AND IT ARRIVES A WEEK LATER.

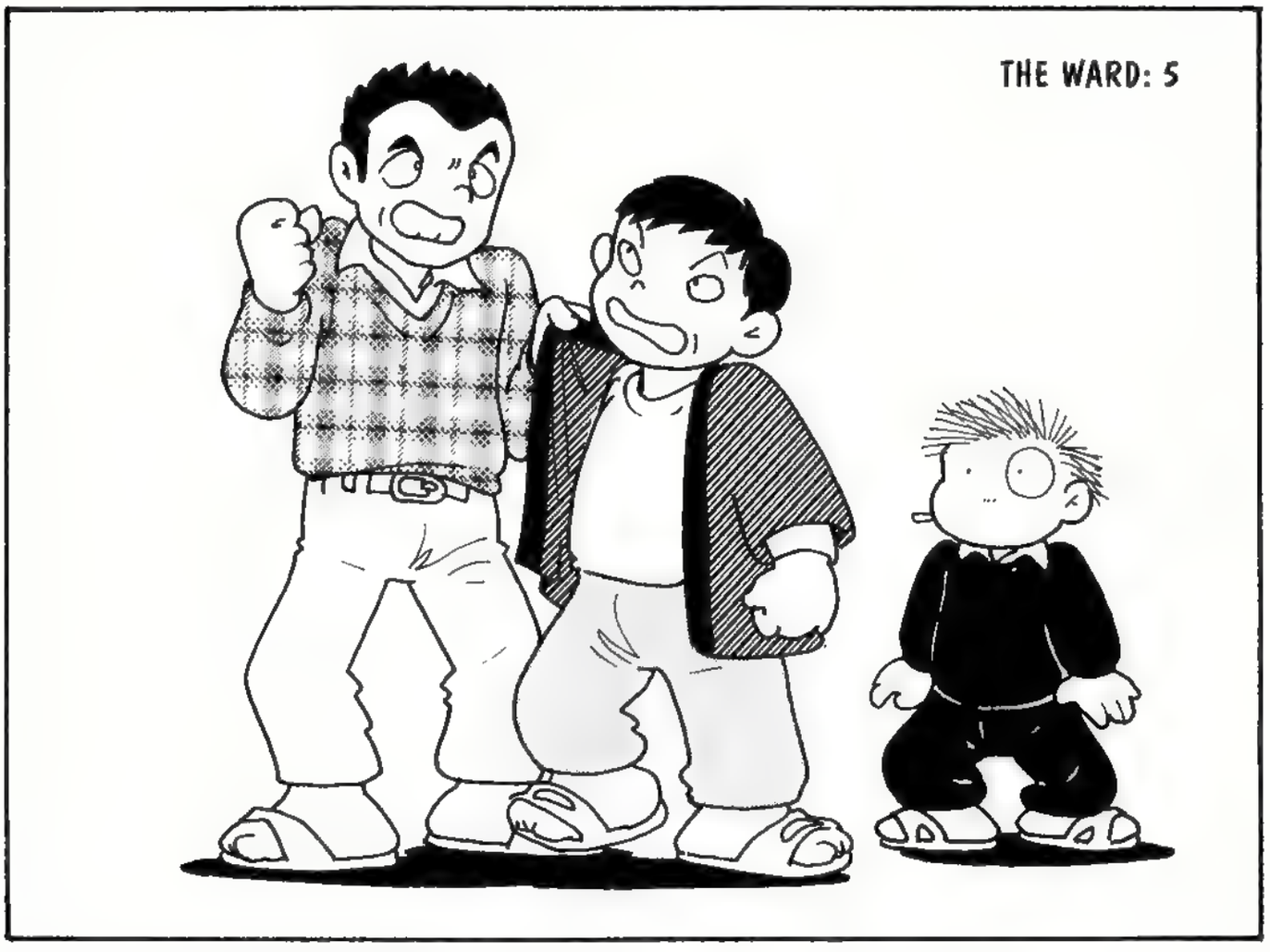
GAHGAHGAH
WE ATE THEM ALL! SORRY!
HER HUSBAND WOULD COME TO VISIT. HE SEEMED KINDA CONCEITED.
I HATE THIS HOS-PITAL ...
WHY DON'T YOU HAVE SOME CANDY? LET'S BE FRIENDS!
MINILLA N-MURA (NAMED BY O-TA, THE NURSE)
WHY DON'T YOU HAVE SOME JUICE? LET'S BE FRIENDS!
WHY DON'T YOU HAVE SOME COFFEE OR COCOA? LET'S BE FRIENDS!
ANYWAY, THE PROBLEM WITH THIS GUY WAS EVERYTHING HE HAD, HE'D GIVE TO OTHER PEOPLE. AND TO TOP IT OFF, ONCE HE RAN OUT OF STUFF, HE'D START GIVING AWAY HIS RICE AND SIDE DISHES.
LET'S BE FRIENDS!
BUT NOBODY'D BE FRIENDS WITH HIM...
AT THE IN-HOSPITAL MEETINGS, HE'D SAY THE SAME THING EVERY TIME...
FROM TODAY ON, I WILL TURN OVER A NEW LEAF IN EVERY WAY!
TURN OVER A NEW LEAF IN EVERY WAY!
IN EVERY WAY!!
WHEN HE GOT PERMISSION TO GO OUT, HE DRANK FIFTEEN CANS OF SAKE, COLLAPSED (THIS EVEN THOUGH HE WAS ON CYANAMIDE...), AND CAME BACK TO THE HOSPITAL IN AN AMBULANCE.
WEEOO...
WEEOO...

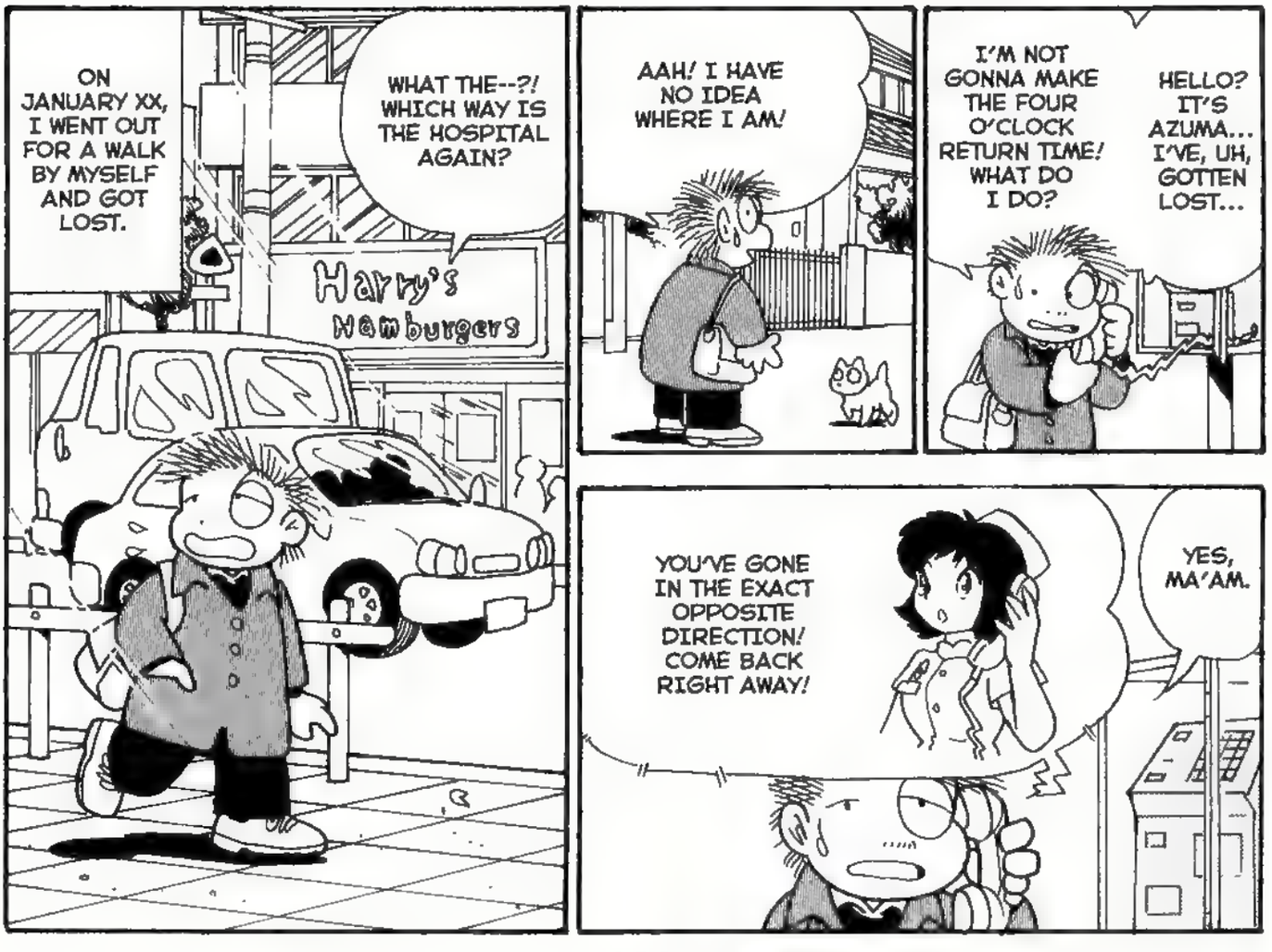
HE WAS INSTANTLY LOCKED AWAY (IN THE "REFLECTION" ROOM. A PRIVATE ROOM THEY LOCKED YOU IN IF YOU DRANK WHILE HOSPITALIZED. SOMETIMES THEY EVEN SKIP MEALS). HE WAS IN 24 HOURS.
AFTER HE GOT OUT, AT THE MEETING, AS ALWAYS ...
I WILL TURN OVER A NEW LEAF IN EV--
LIAR!!
N-MURA, YOU HAVE NO REMORSE!
HE TOOK AN ALL-OUT ASSAULT FROM EVERYONE.
M-TA. THIS WAS HIS SECOND TIME. HE HAD SILKY HAIR, WAS HANDSOME, INTELLIGENT, A SKILLED CONVERSATIONALIST AND IT'S SAID HE EARNED A GOOD SALARY.
HE HAD EXTRAORDINARY STRENGTH.
THIS HUNK. HE WAS SO HELPFUL EVERYONE RELIED ON HIM.
THIS GUY NEVER GOT HUNGOVER NO MATTER HOW MUCH HE DRANK, AND DIDN'T HAVE WITHDRAWAL SYMPTOMS WHEN HE STOPPED.
WELL THEN, MISTER M-TA, YOU'RE NOT AN ALCOHOLIC!
OH, NO! I AM!
I DRANK, TRIED TO KILL MYSELF, AND ENDED UP HERE.
ALCOHOLICS ARE COMPLICATED.
T-YAMA.
HM?
WH--WHY'S THIS GUY STARING AT ME?
STAAARE
WH--WHAT?! WHAT?!

M-TA! DID YOU SEE THE WAY THAT GUY WAS STARING AT ME?! HE WAS FREAKING ME OUT!!
MM, YES. T-YAMA, EH... HE'S GOT WERNICKE-KORSAKOFF SYNDROME. IT CAUSES HIS EYES TO MALFUNCTION. IF HE TURNS THEM IN A CERTAIN DIRECTION THEY CAN GET STUCK THAT WAY. IF THERE'S ANYTHING ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW, JUST ASK.
STARE STARE STARE
HE'S BEEN IN THE HOSPITAL TEN YEARS. IT'S HIS PERMANENT ADDRESS.
UHHH ...
O-TSUKA (PROBABLY HIS 5TH OR 6TH STAY HERE). ON WELFARE.
PAJAMAS
DOESN'T DO ANY DUTIES, DOESN'T SHOW UP AT MEETINGS, DOESN'T GO TO AA, DOESN'T TALK TO ANYBODY, SLEEPS ALL DAY.
HE STARES AT THE DISTANCE ...
HE'S DOESN'T GIVE A DAMN ABOUT HIS LIFE...
K-TO AND G-NO (SAPPY COUPLE)
OH, YOU! TEE HEE!
I'M OLD ENOUGH TO BE YOUR DAD!
AT NIGHT THEY'D DISAPPEAR INTO THE ASSEMBLY ROOM WHEN NO ONE WAS AROUND.
PEH! ALCOHOLICS BECOMING LOVERS?! WHAT'S THE POINT!
WATCHING THEM FLIRT EVERYDAY -- IT'S AN EYESORE! PUT A COMPLAINT IN THE SUGGESTION BOX!
WHA--?! ME--?!

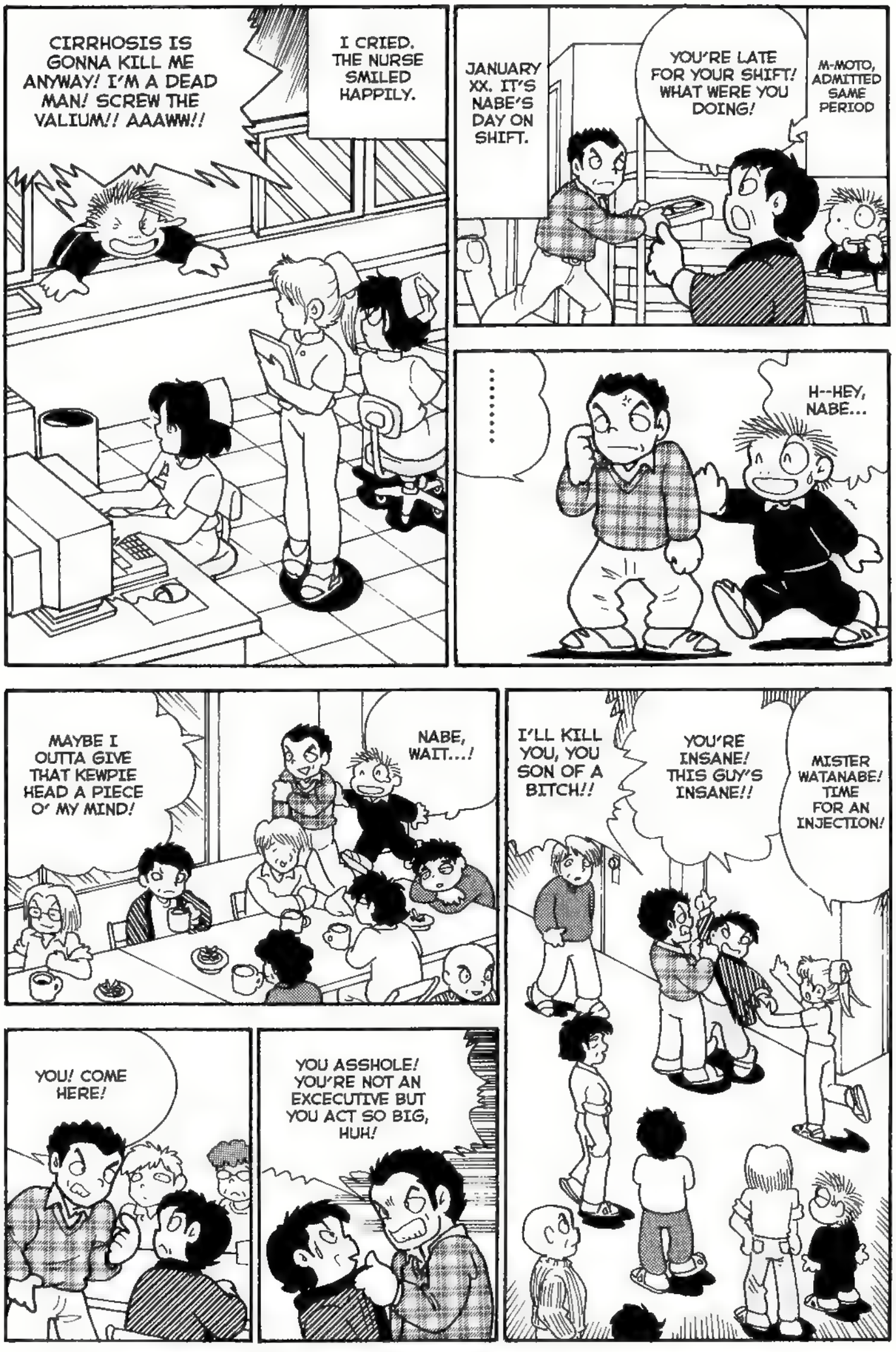
A-KAWA (A ROOM-MATE)
MISTER AZUMA, IF YOU WANT ANYTHING FROM THE SHOPS, I'LL GET IT ON THE WAY FOR YOU!
AW, THANKS! ALL RIGHT... CHOCOLATE.
OH! A-KAWA! HOW ABOUT THAT CHOCOLATE I ASKED FOR?
HUH? WHAT?
YOU NEVER ASKED FOR THAT. WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
I GAVE YOU MONEY BEFORE, REMEMBER?
I DON'T REMEMBER ANY MONEY...
I GAVE YOU 200 YEN BEFORE!
TALK ALL YOU WANT BUT IT'S POINTLESS -- IT'S JUST A DIFFEENCE OF OPINION!
CRUNCH CRUNCH
THAT WAS HIS DEAL. EVERY NEW ARRIVAL WOULD GET TAKEN IN BY THIS SCAM ONCE.
IF YOU NEED ANYTHING FROM THE SHOPS, I'LL GET IT!
SORRY... THANKS.
NABE FELL FOR IT TOO
WHAT'S MORE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, A-KAWA ...
SHRFF
!
PSSS!
AAAHHH!!
WOULD PISS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROOM.


MISTER K-TAKE. BIG, BALD, SUPER SCARY.
HE'D BEEN IN TWO YEARS.
QUEEN T-KI. SHE USED THE NORMALLY SCARY K-TAKE AS HER MANSERVANT AND RAN THE B3 ALCOHOLIC WARD.
HE HAD SUCH A HALF-ASS TATTOO I WANTED TO PUT THE FEAR O' GOD IN 'IM!
HUP!
HE HAD A DRUG ADDICT YAKUZA IN TEARS AND HE ENDED UP CHECKING OUT.
SHE COULD BE GENTLE, BUT SHE HAD A BARBED TONGUE WHEN IT CAME TO JUDGING PEOPLE.
YOU SEE -- THAT'S EXACTLY YOUR PROBLEM! FIX IT!!
YES, MA'AM...
SHE WAS IN THE ASSEMBLY ROOM PRAYING...
ONE MORNING, WHEN IT WAS MY SHIFT TO DO THE WINDOWS ...
WHO IS SHE...?


THE WARD: 5


ON JANUARY XX, I WENT OUT FOR A WALK BY MYSELF AND GOT LOST.
WHAT THE--?! WHICH WAY IS THE HOSPITAL AGAIN?
Harry's Hamburgers
AAH! I HAVE NO IDEA WHERE I AM!
I'M NOT GONNA MAKE THE FOUR O'CLOCK RETURN TIME! WHAT DO I DO?
HELLO? IT'S AZUMA... I'VE, UH, GOTTEN LOST...
YOU'VE GONE IN THE EXACT OPPOSITE DIRECTION! COME BACK RIGHT AWAY!
YES, MA'AM.

I GET BACK.
SORRY I WAS LATE!
MISTER AZUMA, STAY RIGHT THERE AND BREATH OUT!
SNF
SNF
SNF
SNF
SNF
ALL RIGHT, GO ON AHEAD!
YOU DARE TO DOUBT ME!
JANUARY XX. A CHECK UP WITH THE PHYSICIAN.
YOU'RE A STEP AWAY FROM CIRRHOSIS. IF YOU DRINK AGAIN YOU'LL DIE.
THE HEAD NURSE, K-IZUMI, AT THE MORNING MEETING...
THERE ARE INSTANCES OF CIRRHOSIS BEING CURED, BUT THERE'S NOT MUCH DATA ON IT...
YOU'D ALL DIE BEFORE YOU WERE CURED!
SON-OF-A-BITCH! ALWAYS WITH THAT SAME BAIT-AND-SWITCH!
AZUMA, LEMME SEE YOUR PALMS!
I KNEW IT! RED! YOUR VESSELS ARE BLEEDING.
YER GONNA CROAK.
NOT THIS AGAIN !!
MISTER AZUMA! VALIUM FOR YOU TOMORROW!
UHHRR...
FWUD


CIRRHOSIS IS GONNA KILL ME ANYWAY! I'M A DEAD MAN! SCREW THE VALIUM!! AAAWW!!
I CRIED. THE NURSE SMILED HAPPILY.
JANUARY XX. IT'S NABE'S DAY ON SHIFT.
YOU'RE LATE FOR YOUR SHIFT! WHAT WERE YOU DOING!
M-MOTO, ADMITTED SAME PERIOD
.....
H--HEY, NABE...
MAYBE I OUTTA GIVE THAT KEWPIE HEAD A PIECE O' MY MIND!
NABE, WAIT...!
I'LL KILL YOU, YOU SON OF A BITCH!!
YOU'RE INSANE! THIS GUY'S INSANE!!
MISTER WATANABE! TIME FOR AN INJECTION!
YOU! COME HERE!
YOU ASSHOLE! YOU'RE NOT AN EXCECUTIVE BUT YOU ACT SO BIG, HUH!

JANUARY XX. NIGHT.
THIS COLD COFFEE'S NICE! IT'D BE EVEN BETTER IF IT HAD ICE IN IT!
MMPH.
THEY GAVE US SOME A WHILE BACK. I'LL ASK AND SEE!
NABE, I DON'T THINK YOU SHOULD --
ICE COSTS MONEY, SO THE ANSWER IS NO!
BUT YOU JUST GAVE US SOME A WHILE BACK! HOW CAN YOU BE SO STINGY ABOUT SOME GODDAMN ICE?!!
SEE?
NO MEANS NO!
GET THE HEAD NURSE K-IZUMI OUT HERE! NOW!
THIS IS GONNA GO ON A WHILE. I'M GOING TO BED.
NGZZ
IN THE NIGHT I GOT UP TO USE THE TOILET, AND...
DON'T PLAY GAMES WITH ME! I'M GETTIN' THE HELL OUTTA THIS DUMP!
THEN GET OUT! GO!
HE'S STILL GOING ...?!
MORNING, FIRST FLOOR LOBBY...
OH! NABE! WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT?
OH! WELL!
I TOLD 'EM I WAS GETTING OUTTA THIS JOINT, SO K-IZUMI SAID, "FINE, JUST GO THEN!"
WHOA... IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...?!
I WAS TRAPPED... I HAD TO GO OUT TO A NEARBY PHONE BOOTH IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT...

WHEN THE GENERAL AFFAIRS OFFICE OPENS TODAY, I'M GONNA GET MY MONEY FROM THEM AND GO BACK TO MY APARTMENT.
HOW DID ICE TURN INTO ALL THIS...?
IT'S ALL RIGHT. I'M NOT GONNA DRINK NO MATTER WHAT ANYWAY.
MAYBE YOU'RE NOT CUT OUT FOR COMMUNAL LIVING, NABE. YOU'RE SUCH A STRAIGHTFORWARD GUY.
TWO OR THREE DAYS LATER, AT THE AA MEETING ...
HEY THERE, AZUMA!
NABE! GREAT! YOU'RE NOT DRINKING!
... I SAID, BUT, SURE ENOUGH, HE SLIPPED (WENT BACK TO DRINK-ING).
WEEOOO~ WEEOO~
HE WAS TAKEN AWAY IN AN AMBULANCE.
NAH UH! THIS PATIENT'S NOT COMING TO MY HOSPITAL!
K-IZUMI REFUSED TO ADMIT HIM.
I WONDER WHAT NABE'S UP TO...
MISTER AZUMA... YOU'VE GOT A LOTTA LUGGAGE THERE, HUH.
MISS T-KI! MISTER K-TAKE!

*ISEYA/ CHURCH

THEY'RE SNACKS TO HAND OUT DURING RECREATION. I'M IN CHARGE OF THEM.
K-TAKE, GIVE HIM A HAND.
YES, MA'AM.
YOU SHOULD TAKE A BREAK TOO, MISTER AZUMA.
FUU... IT REALLY IS NICE HOW FREE THIS HOSPITAL IS, HUH?
MISS T-KI, WHERE WERE YOU BEFORE?
WHAT GORGEOUS WEATHER!
MISS T-KI! YOU'LL GET COVERED IN MUD!
COME ON! STOP THAT NOW!
NAH, I'M FINE!
MAYBE ANOTHER TWO MONTHS HERE...
WHOOOO
THERE WERE A LOT OF OTHER THINGS THAT HAPPENED AND STRANGE PEOPLE I MET HERE, BUT I'LL SAVE THAT FOR NEXT TIME...
IT'S LIKE SOME KINDA COMING-OF-AGE MOVIE FOR OLD PEOPLE...
PATT PATT

Conversation between
Hideo Azuma and Miki Tori

Tori: It's been such a long time. The last time we met face-to-face was that interview (for "Manga-ka no Himitsu," <Secrets of Manga Artists> Tokuma Shoten, 1997. Tori acted as host, interviewing nine creators, and the section on Azuma included discussion about the "disappearance" episodes related here from 1985 to 1993. The actual interview was conducted in the fall of 95.). So, I've just had the pleasure of reading this new work – "Disappearance Diary"... It was innncredibly entertaining!

Azuma: You think so? (laughs)

Tori: Yes, truly. When we did that interview, you were already working on one part of "Walking At Night" (included in this book as "Night: 1"), I believe. And I'm quite sure you said to me, "There were so many miserable things that happened in the stories about my disappearances, I'm thinking I might try doing it with the main character as a cat."

Azuma: Right, right, right.

Tori: And I said, "I think having yourself as the main character would absolutely be the more interesting way to go." Irresponsible as that was. (laughs) And now – though I don't think it has anything to do with what I said – we have a book in front of us that's done exactly that, and it's quite deeply emotive as a result.

Azuma: No, I did take your opinion into consideration! I wondered if it really would be funnier if I put myself in it. Well, I still avoided going into the truly wretched stuff.

Tori: I think the events that are portrayed are still very abject, but they don't really feel that way. That delicate distancing made reading it incredibly interesting. To put it quite bluntly, in the past, with the Garo group of manga artists, there were several who "walked on the other side" and came back. But I find their subsequent works... sure enough, they're somehow kind of strange, don't you think? (laughs) I mean, still, that's part of what makes it interesting. But the perspective in your manga hasn't changed any since the old days. It's still very reserved... cool, right. As usual, I guess you could say, it has a controlled feel. It feels like you're keeping yourself collected and looking at the work in terms of the gags.

Azuma: That's because looking at your self from a third person perspective is the basis of comedy.

Tori: Even in the middle of your disappearance, could you see yourself objectively?

Azuma: Nooo, you're in no position to think like that! (laughs) The cold and things really made me think I was gonna die. (laughs) I didn't sleep for a week... When I returned home, I started to wonder if maybe I could use the experience as material. I'd write things in my notebook like, "I was so cold I thought I was dying." But when I looked at it the next morning my wife had added, "... We were much more miserable than you!"

(both laugh)

Azuma: My family was a mess. So as I was working on it, I'd get really nervous before handing off the pages to my wife to finish off. I was so happy-go-lucky drawing them, I wondered if it might piss her off again. (laughs)

Tori: Ah! (laughs) ... But on the other hand, both critics and creators tend to be in awe of warts and all EXPOSÉS which are not turned into gags. "As a writer," they say. I think that's absolutely wrong. I think representing horrible experiences as gags, that pain... revealing it as art is truly the more difficult path.

"elephants' boneyard." (laughs)

Tori: Where no one would see you...

Azuma: Right, right. Where even if I died and turned to bones, no one would find me. Well, during my second disappearance, I thought about drawing some pictures on some paper I'd picked up and selling it on the street in Shinjuku. (laughs) What an idiotic idea! (laughs)

Tori: Well, in our last interview, you talked about being hassled by the cops and then writing "Dream" on that colored paper... To this day I sort of wonder if maybe that was made up? (laughs) It's hard to believe. ... What really happened then?

Azuma: That was real! (laughs)

Tori: Really?! Huh! Unbelieveable!! (laughs) When you first told me about it, it cracked me up, but after I got home, I half thought, maybe you were actually just having fun with me. Well...

Azuma: There were things I didn't depict as well, but everything that's there really happened. All that stuff about gas pipe fitting too.

Tori: With gas, one wrong step is big trouble, isn't it? So were there any stories you couldn't write about?

Azuma: Uhh... there were. (laughs) It didn't happen on any of my sites, but once a building got destroyed. There was a gas leak but this guy decided to light a cigarette. They told me I couldn't tell anybody about that. (laughs)

Tori: This part about cutting the wrong gas pipe (page 117) too. If there'd been one wrong move...

Azuma: Oh, that kind of thing was always happening! (laughs) Yanai cut the wrong pipes all the time, and then he'd fix them himself. Sometimes the pipe laying diagram itself had mistakes in it. But now gas pipe technology has advanced and they have these "PE pipes" made of synthetic resin. That's why there were almost no gas leaks during the recent Niigata earthquake.

Tori: The episode where you submitted to the company newsletter was hilarious. I just thought, Why?! I'm thinking, You ran away from manga so you could do work like this, so why did you allow yourself to start drawing again for the company newsletter...

Azuma: I thought I might end up with something like Denko-chan. (laughs) Or not? (laughs) (The Tokyo Electric Power mascot.)

Tori: The stories about Akita Shoten in the latter half of "Walking Around Town", personally I really couldn't read without crying. (laughs) I debuted at Akita, but reading this, I can see you went down exactly the same path! (laughs) Looking back, I'm partly grateful for the great freedom I had to do what I wanted, but at the time, you know, I was young too and arrogant and wrong about things. Mister [Taizo] Kabemura (famous former head editor of Shonen Champion. Passed away December 98) was like a gangster, wasn't he? (laughs) He was sooo scary! He just had that piercing gaze, and I've even heard stories about him tearing up pages by (Osamu) Tezuka.

Azuma: For me, often I usually got the... "Kabemura Kick." Every time I saw him. He'd kick me in the knees, totally straight faced. Like, "How are you, Azuma!" Clonk! (laughs)

Tori: My first editor was [Kunihiko] Akutsu (he appears on the bottom tier of page 129), and he'd make tons of corrections to my

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What's that you said about "The moderator muttered incomprehensible words" (page 182)?

Ah, that one's brain was totally scrambled (laughter). There are lots of women who are alcoholic. That moderator had a bad reputation and everyone wanted to get rid of her. Sometimes she'd wear a turban on her head that looked very odd, and people wanted to forbid her from wearing that kind of clothing (laughter). She just wanted to show off. They said it was her fault that fewer people came.

How could someone like that be the moderator? (laughter)

I haven't the foggiest (laughter)

What's with the "Hi, Ken!!" (page 182)?

This association is American in origin, so the greeting is "Hi, Ken!!". First you stand up and say, "Hi, I'm Ken", to which everyone replies all together "Hi, Ken!". Then you say: "I'm not going to drink today" and you sit down. There are people who talk a lot, but the ones that don't feel like talking just say that one sentence. That kind of person usually starts drinking once more and end up in rehab again.

What were you like, Mr. Azuma?

I always told a joke (laughter). I thought that, at least, I could make people laugh. Things like: after drinking, I was mugged. Sometimes they weren't funny so they'd look askance at me, but other times they were (laughter). I always try to do something to make people laugh. So that everyone can enjoy themselves. Leaving the eggs in the park (page 78) was for that too. And to finish, we'd all pray together. Famous words that are found in many novels. Since I'm not a christian, I just kept my mouth shut (laughter). During the meetings, the ones from AA would fight those who were against them. It happened a lot. I love watching fights, so I'd think, "I can use this in some manga" (laughter). I've never been in a fight. While drunk, I've cussed people out over the phone (laughter). A phone call can't hurt me physically. I've often argued like that with my brother. Since he lives in Hokkaido, there's no problem (laughter).

Well, and what are your prospects for the future?

Ah, I have no future prospects (laughter).

What's your ideal life like?

Spend all day drinking sake and sleeping, and not doing anything while I watch TV or read a book. Right now, what I like most is to read books. And also to watch humorous programs on TV like "The Gold Medal of Laughter" or "The God of Entertainment". I like the Ungirls and, even though they're not yet very well-known, the Poison Girls band. I go to bed early, around midnight, so I don't see very many late-night shows.

The girls you draw, Mr. Azuma, are very pretty. They look good in uniforms and falling socks.

It's just that I like falling socks. Well, and I like uniforms too. I don't care whether they have a jacket or a sailor blouse as long as it's a uniform (laughter). But when I was alcoholic, I totally lost interest in girls.

Do you prefer young girls with a childish appearance?

Before I did, but now, not so much. I like them to have a baby-face and a mature body (laughter).

Like Yumi Adachi, for example?

Yeah, I like her. Yuko Ogura is pretty but she doesn't turn me on at all. She looks like she's flat (laughter).

What do you think of Yuka?

Yeah, I like her quite a bit... but let's drop this subject (laughter).

Do you use the internet?

No. My kids do. I have a strip in the "2 Channel Plus" magazine published by Core Magazine. It's the editor who's always giving me ideas. He tells me to do things like "Densha Otoko", which is popular. Earlier I'd done something with Mona because it was all the rage. Or Gikoneko. And I drew a lot of ASCII characters. I also made drawings based on ideas of Masashi Tashiro. He's very well-known on 2 Channel. ...There aren't many people who do things as resolutely (laughter). Won't he make any more movies? A drug addict, who was in the same hospital I was used to say he was going to get clean so he could become a pusher (laughter).

You're going to continue drawing manga, right Mr. Azuma?

I don't know how to do anything else, I'll continue to draw (laughter). A little extra income to support my family won't hurt.

(Interviewed by Kiuchi Maya)

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